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REAL HE-MAN
AFTER ALL.**

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A
MAN**

**DEAN'S
50-STATE
STRATEGY**

John Nichols

**RECONSTITUTING
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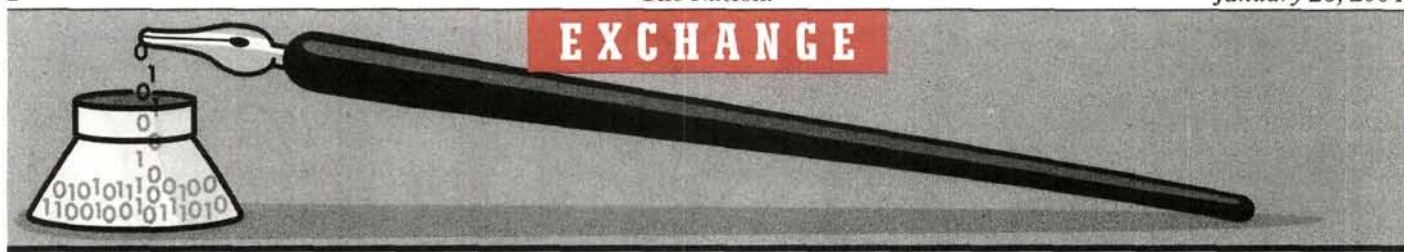
**AND DEMOCRATS
USED TO BE
SUCH
SISSIES!**

**BUTCHING UP
FOR VICTORY**
by RICHARD GOLDSTEIN

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CHRISTOPH NEMANN

'Fog of War' vs. 'Stop the Presses'

Cambridge, Mass.

Over the years I have read with avidity various intellectual disputes in *The New York Review of Books* and other literary journals. But I have never imagined myself being a part of one of them. However, I found Eric Alterman's December 15 "Stop the Presses" column on my recent film, *The Fog of War*, so devoid of historical scholarship (despite his claim of having worked on his PhD for eleven years) that I feel compelled to respond.

Alterman called me just after finishing the piece, first leaving a message with my office that I needed to be "prepared to answer some difficult questions." I called him. He read me sections of the piece. In particular, the passage, "After the screening of the film...[Morris] argued that the popular view of a 'vacillatory Johnson and advisers like McNamara breathing down his neck' for war was false. Well, Morris is a brilliant filmmaker, but he is not a historian." Of course, I didn't care for his suggestion that the history in the film is flawed. But I am willing to acknowledge my errors and mistakes. I just would like them to be clearly elucidated.

Alterman went on to portray McNamara as the prime mover in the conflict: It is a bellicose McNamara egging on a vacillatory LBJ. This view is widely held and has become one of the central myths about the escalation of the war. McNamara, the numbers cruncher, the statistician, the "IBM machine with legs," goaded LBJ into war, and then cried alligator tears when it was too damn late. (Last year, HBO presented *The Path to War*—Frankenheimer's last film—with Alec Baldwin playing Robert McNamara. Not surprisingly, it promoted this same thesis: LBJ vacillatory; McNamara bellicose.)

The only problem with this account is that it is not compatible with recently released historical documentation—in particular, JFK's recordings of his Cabinet meetings and LBJ's selective recordings of his phone conversations.

One of the recordings that most interests me—and that has been included in *The Fog of War*—is a JFK Cabinet meeting from October 2, 1963, that occurred just after McNamara had returned from an inspection trip to Vietnam. In the meeting, McNamara argues for the removal of 1,000 US advisers from Vietnam by Christmastime and the removal of the remaining 15,000 advisers by 1965. McNamara cites this conversation in his Vietnam opus, *In Retrospect*, but it has only recently been released to the public by the Kennedy library. Here is an exchange between Kennedy and McNamara:

Kennedy: The advantage to taking them out is?

McNamara: We can say to the Congress and people that we do have a plan for reducing the exposure of US combat personnel.

K: My only reservation about it is if the war doesn't continue to go well, it will look like we were overly optimistic.

McN: We need a way to get out of Vietnam, and this is a way of doing it.

Soon after taking office, Lyndon Johnson began covertly recording his telephone conversations. In one of these conversations, from February 25, 1964—approximately three months after Kennedy's assassination—Johnson can be heard chastising McNamara for that recommendation to remove advisers from Vietnam:

Johnson: I always thought it was foolish for you to make any statements about withdrawing. I thought it was bad psychologically. But you and the President thought otherwise, and I just sat silent.

McN: The problem is...

J: Then come the questions: how in the hell does McNamara think, when he's losing a war, he can pull men out of there?

What is important about this conversation is that Johnson is stating unequivocally that he disagreed (although he remained silent) with their decision to withdraw advisers starting in 1963, to culminate in all of them being removed by 1965, after the 1964 presidential election.

In "Exit Strategies" in *The Boston Review*, James Galbraith writes about the October 2 meeting and wonders why it has been so often neglected by historians and journalists. Why indeed? My theory is that it runs counter to what most people want to hear. (But just because it isn't what people want to hear doesn't mean it isn't true.)

My conversation with Alterman was somewhat surreal. I asked him: How do you account for these conversations? Alterman answered, I don't have to. I answered, Yes, you do. If you believe that McNamara pressed a vacillatory Johnson into war, you have to explain what's going on in this period immediately before and after JFK's assassination. These conversations are part of it. Alterman answered, Well, I could pick another set of conversations that prove the exact opposite. I urged him to do so. He said there are dozens of conversations that show Johnson confused, hand-wringing, vacillatory. Finally, he read several from 1965.

I said, Not relevant. The issue is late 1963 and early 1964. Sure, Johnson was given to self-

pity, self-doubt, hand-wringing about his decisions to escalate, but as the historian Fredrik Logevall wrote in his 1999 work *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam*: "Johnson's doubts, though considerable...centered on whether the war effort would be successful rather than on whether it should be undertaken." (There is also the important question of whether it suited Johnson to portray himself publicly as being reluctant to escalate, in spite of what his real intentions may have been in the matter.)

The February 25, 1964, conversation between Johnson and McNamara provides evidence that Johnson had no intention of losing the war in Vietnam. It also reveals that Johnson's intention to escalate in Vietnam was formulated before Kennedy's assassination and Diem's assassination, as early as October 2, 1963, and probably before. I urged Alterman to read Galbraith's piece. He told me he didn't have to. He had read other pieces Galbraith has written.

The story of McNamara as told in *The Fog of War* certainly does not let him off the hook. It is a different story, not a better one. If McNamara was skeptical of increased US involvement in Vietnam, why did he support bombing North Vietnam in March 1965 and the 100,000-man troop increase in July 1965? Why did he publicly support the Vietnam War if he was afflicted with private doubts? Did his loyalty to Johnson, to the presidency, trump his better inclinations? Or did he reassess the dangers to the United States of a unified, Communist Vietnam?

It is not my intention to exonerate McNamara for his involvement in the planning of the Vietnam War. What I do intend is to help correct a common misconception that President Johnson was bullied into a war that he had no intention of fighting. Is this important? Does this matter? Yes, because what we are now faced with is this question: What do you do if you serve a bellicose President who wants to go to war no matter what? What protections are provided for this contingency within our system of government? What recourse does a Cabinet member have if he disagrees with the President's policies? Should he go to Congress? To the public? Or should he stay and try to change policy within the government? These are particularly pertinent questions that unfortunately are not being asked. I'm not at all certain that we can learn from history, but we certainly can't learn from it if it is ignored. Santayana is well-known for saying, Those that are unfamiliar with history are condemned to repeat it. He is less known for a far more interesting quote: History is wrong, and always has to be rewritten. In recent years, the transcripts of Kennedy's executive committee meetings on the Cuban missile crisis have been

(Continued on Page 20)

EXCHANGE

- 2 "FOG OF WAR" vs. "STOP THE PRESSES"
Errol Morris, Eric Alterman

EDITORIALS & COMMENT

- 3 MAD COW, MAD POLICY
Ahmed Rashid
- 4 REBUILDING AFGHANISTAN
Ahmed Rashid
- 5 HELPING NADER DECIDE
- 5 ELECTION MATTERS
Economics 2004
William Greider
- 7 MORE BAD JUDGES
Jack Newfield
- 21 IN FACT...
- 22 LENNY FROM HEAVEN
Richard Lingeman

COLUMNS

- 6 DEADLINE POET
On Winning the War and Losing the Alerts
Calvin Trillin
- 8 BEAT THE DEVIL
Bush as Hitler? Let's Be Fair
Alexander Cockburn
- 9 DIARY OF A MAD LAW PROFESSOR
Baghdad Beat
Patricia J. Williams
- 10 LOOKOUT
The Year of the Fake
Naomi Klein

ARTICLES

- 11 BUTCHING UP FOR VICTORY
Bush projects macho, but it looks forced.
Could Howard Dean be the "it" candidate?
Richard Goldstein

- 14 DEAN'S FIFTY-STATE STRATEGY
Iowa and New Hampshire are important, but it takes 2,162 delegates to win.
John Nichols

BOOKS & THE ARTS

- 23 GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ: Living to Tell the Tale
Perry Anderson
- 29 LE CARRÉ: Absolute Friends
Patrick Smith
- 32 THEATER
Caroline, or Change
Baz Dreisinger
- Cover by *Gene Case and Stephen Kling/Avenging Angels*; artwork based on the original Charles Atlas ad; illustrations by *Christoph Niemann, Peter O. Zierlein*

EDITORIALS

Mad Cow, Mad Policy

When Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman and the agribusiness insiders-turned-"regulators" who run George W. Bush's Agriculture Department finally acknowledged that a case of mad cow disease had been found on a Washington State factory farm, the first order of business was to protect the agribusiness interests that have resisted basic food-safety measures for years. Veneman repeated the tired "nothing to fear" spin that British government aides peddled more than a decade ago, when they were downplaying the significance of the discovery there of bovine spongiform encephalopathy. The British BSE outbreak led to devastation for that country's farmers, the slaughter of millions of cows and the death of more than 130 people from the human form of the disease. By studying Britain's experience, the USDA and the Food and Drug Administration might well have been able to prevent the spread of mad cow disease in the United States. Instead, they created what food-safety activist John Stauber describes as "a testing system that was designed not to find the disease."

Despite Veneman's public reassurances, she could not have known that the food supply was safe. That's because the United States has failed to follow World Health Organization recommendations that sick cattle be tested for BSE before slaughter. Of 35 million head slaughtered for human consumption in the last fiscal year in the United States, only about 20,000 were tested—as compared with virtually all cattle in Japan and Europe. No wonder Britain's *Independent* newspaper answered Veneman's announcement with an editorial that read, "The temptation will be strong to greet the first case of BSE in the United States with self-satisfied gloating and a rousing chorus of 'We told you so.' There have been suspicions for years that the U.S. was not, and

could not be, free from the cattle disease and that it was only lax enforcement and the willingness of some ranchers to slaughter and bury the occasional 'mad cow' on the quiet, that allowed the Americans to claim for so long that they were BSE-free."

Stauber, co-author of the 1997 book *Mad Cow USA*, and other critics argue that the disease is more widespread in American herds than the USDA will admit. When this country's trading partners banned imports of US beef, they put their faith in the critics' analysis, and rightly so. Like other Bush Administration aides who are charged with protecting public health and safety, Veneman casts her lot with the industries she is supposed to regulate. It was never any secret that her primary "qualification" for the Agriculture Secretary's job was her closeness to the potent agribusiness interests she served as a lobbyist and advocate of free trade and genetic modification of food.

In fairness, Veneman and her aides are not much worse than the crew that occupied top positions at the USDA under Bill Clinton. But the danger to the livelihoods of American farmers, and to the lives of American consumers, is now real enough that Veneman cannot be allowed to continue to peddle untruths. Congress must force the USDA to require the testing of all cattle before slaughter and to ban the feeding of slaughterhouse waste to animals that are eaten by human beings. Congress should also take the advice of the National Farmers Union and force the USDA to implement the NFU's recommended mandatory standards for a product to receive the "made in the USA" label. It should move to break the monopolistic grip of agribusiness conglomerates like Tyson and Smithfield, which have imposed bottom-line values on beef processing. Finally, Congress should provide emergency relief to working farmers and ranchers, who face ruin because of the shameful failure of Ann Veneman and the USDA to maintain the safety—and, with it, the integrity—of the US food supply.

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Rebuilding Afghanistan

After twenty-one tension-filled days of raucous speeches, poetry readings, threats, bribery and walkouts, Afghanistan's *loya jirga*, held to endorse a new Constitution for Afghanistan after twenty-six years of war, concluded on January 4. The powerful presidential system demanded by President Hamid Karzai and the Pashtun population was watered down—after strident demands by the country's ethnic minorities—to include greater powers to an elected Parliament and minority language rights.

Not surprisingly, the eventual compromises were pushed through from behind the scenes in marathon all-night sessions by the US ambassador and President Bush's special representative to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, and the UN Secretary General's special representative, Lakhdar Brahimi.

Two years after the defeat of the Taliban, the *loya jirga* demonstrated the fact that Afghanistan's acute ethnic divisions—the underlying cause of the 1992–2001 civil war—are still rampant and that a bloc of neo-Taliban Islamic fundamentalists, who helped US forces defeat the Taliban in December 2001, can still exercise enormous influence.

On the positive side, there has been a reassertion of the Pashtuns, who make up 40 percent of the country's population but have been alienated and humiliated since 2001 because the Taliban drew their support from them. The Pashtuns supported a strong presidential system because they saw a strong center as being in their self-interest. Karzai, himself a Pashtun, must now insure that the Pashtuns do not antagonize the minorities and instead help create a truly multiethnic nation-state rather than dominate the minorities, as they have done for hundreds of years. Despite apprehensions, Afghan women fared well. The delegates doubled the number of seats guaranteed to women in the new Parliament to 25 percent of the total, and women's rights were specifically mentioned in the Constitution despite efforts by the fundamentalists to have the item scratched.

The underlying reason ethnic tensions still exist two years on is the utter and irresponsible failure of the international community to live up to the promises made at Bonn in December 2001, which set out the road map for Afghanistan's future. Security in the countryside is abysmal, Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar are still at large, and the 11,500 US-led coalition forces in the country are too few to stop the resurgence of the Taliban, who have killed some 400 Afghan soldiers, policemen, civilians and Western and Afghan aid workers and contractors since July.

The 5,500 NATO-led international peacekeeping troops still cannot deploy outside Kabul, because European countries have failed to find the troops to accompany them. (The Europeans were willing to provide more troops immediately after the defeat of the Taliban, but Washington blocked the move then, fearing that more peacekeepers would interfere with the hunt for bin Laden.) Nor has the international community disbursed adequate funds for the reconstruction of this blighted country.

The United States is insisting that elections be held by June, as set out by Bonn, or September at the latest. This is primarily be-

COMMENT

cause President Bush wants a success story to show to American voters for the US elections in November, given that the good news out of Iraq is likely to be sparse. On the other hand, the UN, many European and NATO states, Western and Afghan NGOs, and many prominent Afghans, including at least half the Afghan Cabinet, say elections should be postponed for at least a year.

The Bonn summit stipulated that presidential and parliamentary elections be held at the same time, but the Americans say presidential elections should go ahead this year while parliamentary elections can be delayed. Reginald Austin of the UN's voter-registration unit, which in December started registering 10.5 million voters—two months late because of lack of funding—says his job cannot be done in time. Lack of security in the south, where the Taliban have threatened to kill his registration teams, has slowed down the process. Never mind, say some US officials: We will ink voters' thumbs if ID cards cannot be supplied.

To Washington's credit, it approved an additional \$1.2 billion in late 2003, bringing its total aid commitment to \$2 billion for 2004. American forces are setting up six more small Provincial Reconstruction Teams in the Pashtun belt to improve security in Taliban areas. By March there will be twelve such teams around the country, but they are too small, and there are too few of them, to provide security to the Afghan population.

Unfortunately, the United States has failed to persuade the European and Muslim nations to increase aid and money. The Europeans in particular, still enraged over US unilateralism in Iraq, now see the American agenda in Afghanistan as being equally unilateral—serving Bush's political needs—and thus see no reason to back it with money. The war in Afghanistan started out as a multilateral effort, while the Bonn agreement, under the auspices of the UN, drew similar international support. The Europeans say the United States has undermined this multilateral approach and is setting the agenda in Afghanistan, as it has done in Iraq. The United States, for its part, is bitter about the lack of European commitment to Afghanistan, while President Karzai is also frustrated.

Only the provision of livelihoods, security and reconstruction will ease ethnic, religious and regional tensions so that elections can be held in a meaningful and peaceful manner. Several important programs have just started and will certainly not reach fruition before June. These include a UN-led effort to disarm and demobilize 100,000 militiamen; a World Bank-led effort to provide money to each of the country's thirty-two provinces to kick-start rural reconstruction; and a US-led effort to build a new national army and police force and create a new civil service and judiciary.

Nobody has yet thought of how to tackle the burgeoning drug problem. While the Taliban had cut opium production virtually to zero by the last year of their rule, by 2003 Afghanistan was producing 3,600 tons annually, which helps maintain the war-lords in power.

Afghanistan's elections should be postponed through a new UN/international community/Afghan government agreement. Lakhdar Brahimi has in fact proposed a Bonn II meeting. And the United States must bring the Europeans, the UN and others into the international decision-making process over Afghanistan. The war on terrorism cannot be fought over the skies of Washington

and New York—much less in Iraq, where it didn't exist before the US invasion—but must continue by other means in helping to rebuild a nation that was hijacked by Osama bin Laden and still has the potential to become the world's epicenter for an Al Qaeda revival. The Afghans need enormous help, but so far the world has failed to live up to its promises.

AHMED RASHID

Ahmed Rashid, the Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan correspondent for the Far Eastern Economic Review, is the author of two recent bestsellers, Taliban (Yale) and Jihad (Penguin).

Economics 2004



The Democratic Party has come a long way from the "lockbox" economics of 2000. Four years ago, Al Gore campaigned on a promise to maintain federal budget surpluses as far as the eye could see—and to use the money to pay off the national debt. This year, every candidate has evidently figured out that fiscal rectitude does not alone win elections. So they are all promising to spend public money on more positive objectives—big spending, in some cases. Four years ago, Gore attacked from the right, denouncing Bill Bradley's modest healthcare proposal as fiscally irresponsible. This year, every Democrat has a substantial plan to reform healthcare, and some of them want to go all the way: universal coverage. Gore himself now blesses the concept.

HELPING NADER DECIDE

There is no segment of Americans more attuned to Ralph Nader's prophetic themes than *Nation* readers—many of whom supported his presidential candidacy in 2000. Nader has now established the Nader 2004 Presidential Exploratory Committee. He has indicated that he will decide whether to run as an Independent—not as a Green—sometime before the end of January.

On his exploratory committee website, Nader asks friends to fill out a questionnaire advising him on whether to run again—and whether they will support him if he so chooses. He's already heard from those progressives who opposed his candidacy in 2000 and from some who supported it then but do not now (see Micah L. Sifry, "Ralph Redux?" November 24, 2003). He has heard our views (see John Nichols, "Fleeing the Greens," January 12/19). We have published letters both pro and con, reflecting a rough balance in the views of those moved to write us (see Exchange, "How Green Was My Tally," January 5).

But there is probably no group more influential with Nader during this exploratory time than those who have supported him in the past but have thus far remained silent on the 2004 race. We urge such readers to accept his invitation to advise him now by completing the questionnaire at www.naderexplore04.com.

COMMENT

Collectively, the Dems share a far more aggressive posture on economic issues than the one inherited from the Clinton era. The party is not exactly turning left, but its would-be leaders are definitely sidestepping toward a more ambitious liberal agenda. The shift is probably accompanied by belated regrets. If Gore had run on a stronger agenda in 2000, he would likely be President today. If Congressional Democrats had not lost their voices during the 2002 elections, they might not be a virtually impotent minority in the House and Senate.

In any case, the Democrats hardly have much choice for 2004, given that Bush has governed so brutishly and nearly obliterated the landscape left behind by Bill Clinton. Who can accuse the Dems of liberal profligacy when Bush has shifted fiscal policy from \$200 billion surpluses to \$500 billion deficits? How can the right attack Democrats for expanding the welfare state when the Republicans have just done so themselves, with their expensive new drug benefit?

If one sifts through the candidates' policy papers and speeches, a rough consensus is visible on three large propositions—all important goals. Healthcare reform, including insurance coverage for all children and maybe for all adults too. Confronting the global trading system with major reforms, that is, "fair trade" rules on labor rights and environmental protection, and less freewheeling power for multinational corporations. A major restoration of public investment for long-term objectives—renewable energy production and public infrastructure, everything from high-speed rail to hydrogen fuel cells to rebuilding inner-city neighborhoods. One way or another, these three proposals are also designed to stimulate jobs and raise incomes.

The most imaginative and forward-looking item is the public-works vision called the new Apollo Project—a \$300 billion, ten-year plan to jump-start the transition to the postpetroleum era. Every Democratic candidate has endorsed the concept in generalized terms. It would reduce US oil dependence by financing alternative energy sources like wind and solar power but also guarantee a market for cleaner technologies like hybrid cars and other

energy-efficient products. The agenda was fashioned by a blue-green alliance of organized labor and environmentalists, joined by some businesses and civil rights and community groups. Dick Gephardt bought the whole package, which he dubbed "Apollo 21." Dennis Kucinich goes further and calls for \$500 billion in spending. The public investments under the original program will leverage \$1 trillion in private activities, generating some 3.3 million new jobs (about what Bush has lost in the past three years).

Kucinich is definitely holding up the left wing of the spectrum. He has the most ambitious ideas for challenging corporate power—re-regulation, reinvigorated antitrust enforcement, federal chartering of corporations and ending market dominance of family farmers by large-scale agribusiness. Kucinich likewise embraces a single-payer healthcare system anchored in the federal government (as do Al Sharpton and Carol Moseley Braun), though Gephardt has a more detailed proposal for federal financing that would relieve companies of the health-insurance costs and guarantee coverage for all (paid for by repealing the Bush tax cuts). On trade, Gephardt calls for establishing a global minimum wage.

Joe Lieberman holds up the right flank. He alone among Democrats continues to sing from the free-trade hymnal (though John Kerry hums along under his breath, making tepid challenges to the multinationals). Lieberman has put together his own public-works program, composed of generous industry tax cuts and subsidies mostly aimed at reviving high tech in Silicon Valley. This is the Democratic Leadership Council's view of the economic problem, and Lieberman is sticking with it.

John Edwards has perhaps the most detailed set of prescriptions—a sixty-four-page booklet called *Real Solutions for America* (not to be confused with Kerry's "Real Deal")—and Edwards endorses some long-neglected progressive measures for helping young people and new families with their economic struggles. Edwards wants a tax credit for family leave for new-borns, free first-year college tuition for students who work ten hours a week and a \$5,000 matching tax credit for families purchasing their first home.

Wesley Clark proposes a Corporate Subsidy Reform Commission that would force up-or-down Congressional votes on hoggish subsidies, much as the base-closing commission did for unneeded military posts (Kerry wants a line-item veto for the same purpose). The former general's agenda is surprisingly wonkish, with all sorts of ideas for merging government programs to save money.

Howard Dean, the front-runner attacked by the others as an outsider, is ironically closer to Clinton/Gore economics in his emphatic promise to balance the federal budget (Kerry wants to cut the deficit in half). Given the fiscal mess Bush has created, this sounds like a highly perishable promise (FDR campaigned on the same promise in 1932, but subsequently launched the New Deal). But Dean does not sound like a centrist when he takes a strong line against corporate concentration of power and for reforming the global trading system. In addition to liberal policy positions, he promises to help people gain greater voice and influence in the economic system—suggesting that corporations should regularly disclose not just their financial condition but their performance on environmental protection, antisocial practices and labor relations. This would empower investors, con-

CALVIN TRILLIN

ON WINNING THE WAR AND LOSING THE ALERTS

We're fighting terror in Iraq, Bush says,
So we won't have to fight these guys right here.
Then why the orange alerts and canceled flights
That leave the nation shaky-legged with fear?

No matter. Voters trust the GOP
To battle terror, so the polls have said.
Is orange what Supreme Commander Rove
Believes will turn election maps all red?

sumers and employees to pressure for change. The Bush Administration's cozy dealings with business interests are Washington's equivalent of "Enron economics," Dean observes.

What's missing so far from the Democratic dialogue is a coherent response to Bush's troubled economy. Most candidates point out that the present recovery is bogus unless robust job creation revives, but they don't have much interesting to say beyond that. Nor do they describe a plausible economic strategy for reversing the ominous growth in US trade deficits.

The opposition party, of course, always gets the luxury of focusing blame on the incumbent, with no great need to explain the solutions. That may be the smart politics of this season, but the Democratic Party would sound more convincing if it took greater risks—telling fundamental truths about the country's economic condition that challenge Bush's fake triumphalism.

That may be too much to ask. Just as with Iraq, the Dems are probably hostage to economic events, regardless of what they say or who gets nominated. If things still stink in six months, Bush is in deep trouble. If prosperity is restored, Dems will likely remain the minority party.

WILLIAM GREIDER

More Bad Judges

Here comes the sequel to the Scalia Clones and Thomas Clowns. Karl Rove's White House laboratory has litmus-tested and shipped another batch of extremist nominees to the Senate Judiciary Committee for its members' consent, after not asking for their advice. Hearings are expected to begin soon after Congress reconvenes at the end of January.

These nominees will get the deepest possible scrutiny because of a curiously underreported scandal. In a new excess of zealotry, Republican staffers have stooped to snooping—hacking into the computers of Judiciary Committee Democrats Ted Kennedy and Richard Durbin, stealing fifteen confidential memos and disseminating them to "friendly" media outlets like the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page and the *Washington Times*. The e-mails, whose theft became known only when the *Journal's* editorial page quoted them in November, contained shocking revelations like the fact that Democrats are in touch with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and People for the American Way.

Judiciary Committee chair Orrin Hatch eventually admitted the hacking. He suspended (with pay) one of his own junior staffers and declared himself "mortified" and "shocked," adding, "There is no excuse that can justify these improper actions." It now appears that Manuel Miranda, a senior aide to Senate majority leader Bill Frist, distributed the e-mails to right-wing lobbying groups and propaganda outfits. Miranda previously worked for the Republicans on the Judiciary Committee and was a public advocate for defeated Bush nominees like Miguel Estrada.

When reached at home, Miranda took the position that "there was no wrongdoing." He added, "The bottom line here is that the technology staff of the Democrats was negligent. They put these memos in a shared hard drive. It was like putting the memos on our desk. The Kennedy and Durbin memos are not Senate business. They are collusive, partisan politics. No Senate rule was

violated. There was no hacking, no breaking and entering." Senate Democratic staffers dispute this, saying whoever hacked into their computer files needed a password. The computer invasion is being investigated by Senate sergeant-at-arms William Pickle, who has hired counterespionage expert David Lang.

The combination of more noxious nominations and these dirty tricks has upped the ante in the current judicial filibuster fight, in which the Democrats have so far blocked six Bush nominees. Some evangelical Christian and "family values" pressure groups, plus Senator Trent Lott, are urging Frist to use the "nuclear option" to abolish judicial filibusters. One such option involves having whichever GOP senator is presiding over the Senate at the time rule a filibuster against a nominee out of order and then rule that his position needs only fifty-one votes to be sustained, not the sixty needed to end debate. Some scholars, however, believe the "nuclear option" is unconstitutional and would end up in the courts. Democrats say it will shut down the Senate if used.

Senators Kennedy, Durbin, Charles Schumer, Tom Daschle, Patrick Leahy and their allies began their strategy of filibustering only against what they regarded as "the worst of the worst" Bush nominees in 2002, thinking that what they were attempting was intellectually and morally necessary but that they might pay a price in short-term politics, being seen as obstructionist in the court of public opinion. Now they think they are winning the politics, too. For example, the *Washington Post* editorial page, which supported Estrada's nomination, has opposed several recent Bush nominees as outside the mainstream. The Republicans are the ones who are coming across as intolerant fanatics. Democrats have used the filibuster only against a half-dozen out of 175 Bush nominees; by comparison, GOP senators blocked more than sixty of Bill Clinton's nominees—most by never giving them a hearing or a vote.

The surprising success of the Democrats' strategy has caused stresses and dissension within the Republican coalition. The religious right and antichoice activists expect Bush and Frist to do more than lose cloture votes and deliver speeches calling liberals names. They want the "nuclear option" exercised. And they are muttering that Hatch and Frist are too liberal and lack the will to fight. But even the most conservative senators know they don't have the votes and that a Senate shutdown could generate a public opinion backlash against them, as the government shutdown did in 1995. In November they were reduced to using the pointless public relations stunt of a forty-hour Senate session that accomplished nothing and ended with the Democrats winning another round of cloture roll calls.

Bush's next wave of unfit nominees is now being vetted by the

(Continued on Page 21)

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Nation gives its columnists the widest possible latitude and, as readers know, their views are not always those of the magazine. In this instance, however, the editor wants to go on record as disagreeing profoundly with the analogies made by Alexander Cockburn in his column on page 8.

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Bush as Hitler? Let's Be Fair

Beyond the shared enthusiasm of the Führer and all US Presidents (with the possible exception of Warren Harding) for mass murder as an appropriate expression of national policy, I've never seen any particularly close affinity between Adolf Hitler and the current White House incumbent, but the Republican National Committee seems peculiarly sensitive on the matter.

At the end of the first week in January the RNC lashed out furiously at the Democratic website MoveOn.org for including in its competition for robust campaign ads for 2004 a couple that offered Bush/Hitler comparisons.

One shows Hitler, speaking in German, with a voiceover translating the lines as "We have taken new measures to protect our homeland.... I believe I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator." Then, as Hitler continues to speak, the voiceover says, "God told me to strike Al Qaeda, and I struck them." The visage of A. Hitler becomes that of G. Bush.

As a way of enticing undecided voters to vote against George Bush next November, both ads seem a trifle heavy-handed, which is probably why MoveOn.org's audience didn't include them among the fifteen finalists. But this didn't stop the RNC's screaming. Somewhat cravenly, MoveOn's Wes Boyd then said his group "regrets" the brief appearance of the two ads on the MoveOn website. They're gone now, though as of January 6 you could find the scripts of the offending two on the RNC's site.

Hitler/Bush comparisons began their current vogue after an article by Dave Lindorff appeared last February on CounterPunch.org, the website edited by Jeffrey St. Clair and me, to which Lindorff is a regular and valued contributor.

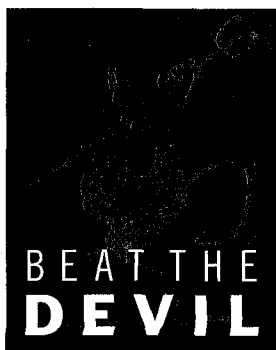
In a full-bore attack on Bush-as-warmonger, Lindorff swept into an impassioned finale, declaring that

we must begin exposing George W. Bush and his War Party for what they are: craven usurpers aiming at nothing less than the undermining of all those things that most of us hold dear.

It's going a bit far to compare the Bush of 2003 to the Hitler of 1933. Bush simply is not the orator that Hitler was. But comparisons of the Bush Administration's fear mongering tactics to those practiced so successfully and with such terrible results by Hitler and Goebbels on the German people and their Weimar Republic are not at all out of line.

I thought Lindorff's measured assessment of the two leaders' rhetorical talents indicated appropriate objectivity, but our *CounterPunch* inbox was soon crammed with furious denunciations of Lindorff from Bush supporters. Then in July one of the *Wall Street Journal*'s mad dogs in residence, James Taranto, did us a favor by taking a passing jab at *CounterPunch* as "an outfit whose staple is stuff comparing Bush to Hitler." There were other useful attacks in *National Review* and the *Washington Times*.

Of course, this allowed Lindorff to return to the scene of the crime, with further measured comparisons between the Bush Ad-



ministration and the Third Reich, such as shared propensities to warmongering, melding of corporate and political elites, recourse to the Big Lie, contempt for civil liberties and due process. Such kinship notwithstanding, in that spirit of fair play for which *CounterPunch* is justly renowned, Lindorff judiciously reminded our readers that "we may not yet have a dictatorship" and that "while he has rounded up some Arab and Muslim men purely because of their ethnicity or religion, Bush has not started gassing them—at least not yet."

I don't think you'd find that gentlemanly sense of fair play from the likes of the ordure-encrusted Taranto or that fat, lying drug fiend Rush Limbaugh. This week Lindorff argues on our site that the two ads dumped by MoveOn.org are pretty good.

My problem with the Hitler-Bush pairing is not so much the comparison per se, which is solidly in the respectable mainstream of political abuse, but in the strange hysteria of Democrats about Bush as a leader of such consummate evil, so vile that any Democrat would be preferable. Any Democrat? George Bush is by definition a warmonger, but Wesley Clark actually issued an order that could have sparked Armageddon. Back in the war on Yugoslavia, in his capacity as NATO's Supreme Commander, Clark ordered the British general, Sir Mike Jackson, to block Russian planes about to land at Pristina airport. Jackson refused to obey, declaring in one furious exchange quoted in *Newsweek*, "I'm not going to start the Third World War for you."

The central political issue this year is the absolute corruption of the political system and of the two parties that share the spoils. Wherever one looks—at the gerrymandered districts, the balloting methods, the fundraising—corruption steams like vapors from a putrid swamp. To rail about Bush as Hitler is to blur what should be the proper focus. If you want to hear an American answer to Hitler-as-warmonger at full tilt, go and read the speeches John F. Kennedy was making and planning to make when he was shot.

Hitler, genocidal monster that he was, was also the first practicing Keynesian leader. When he came to power in 1933 unemployment stood at 40 percent. Economic recovery came without the stimulus of arms spending. Hitler wanted a larger population, so construction subsidies produced a housing boom. There were vast public works, such as the autobahns. He paid little attention to the deficit or to the protests of the bankers about his policies. Interest rates were kept low, and though wages were pegged, family income increased by reason of full employment. By 1936 unemployment had sunk to 1 percent. German military spending remained low until 1939.

Not just Bush but Howard Dean and the Democrats could learn a few lessons in economic policy from that early Keynesian, though they scarcely need encouragement to attack unions. As for warmongering, American Presidents and would-be Presidents don't need lessons from anyone. As Hitler freely acknowledged in his campaign bio, *Mein Kampf*, the debt was the other way round.

PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

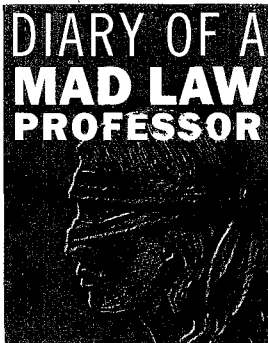
Baghdad Beat

There's a wonderful children's story by Roald Dahl titled *Fantastic Mr. Fox*. Mr. Fox is a wily fellow whose record of chicken theft has driven three local farmers to the point of madness. Using stealth and a big gun, one of them manages to shoot off his tail, but Mr. Fox escapes. Night after night, the farmers maintain their vigil just outside his hole; as their frustration grows they employ more and more extreme methods to force him out—they dig, first with shovels, then bulldozers, driving Mr. Fox and his family ever deeper underground.

Over time the farmers move from mere frustration to all-out obsession. With unbounded determination, they devote themselves full time to upending the entire hillside. This quest succeeds in constraining not just Mr. Fox but terrifying all the creatures in the forest—the badgers, the moles, the rabbits, the harmless creatures whose habitats are destroyed in the relentless pursuit. Mr. Fox, meanwhile, becomes more heroically Robin Hood-ish with each upward ratcheting of the assault. He sets up court deep beneath the farmers' own homes, stealing directly from the chicken coop, the cider cellar and the smokehouse. The story ends with Mr. Fox's having established a comfortable underground protectorate for all the animals. The farmers spend their days, their nights and a never-ending stream of their resources bulldozing the wilderness into oblivion.

Our adventure in Iraq reminds me of Roald Dahl's three determined farmers. The public discourse even sounds like a kiddie cartoon: We have captured "a rat" and assorted varmints but not the fox, Osama bin Laden. As I write, the Army has announced plans to train troops in tactics better suited to modern urban war than World War II-style battle. They are beefing up skills like sniping; they will conduct more house-to-house searches; they will learn the rather subtle art of how to pick an insurgent out of a crowd of civilians.

I am hardly a military strategist, but let me offer my ongoing concern that our leaders are dealing with Iraq in very much the way domestic police forces have too frequently mishandled crime in American inner cities, where wrongheaded tactics like careless profiling have repeatedly fueled community resentment and even riots in areas that had once begged for police presence. The missteps have generally involved a terrible dualism: overreaction to so much as a false twitch of a hand with a wallet in it, yet underreaction to large, complex problems like crack houses and drug lords. I can't help thinking about what happened in 1985, when the police decided to pre-emptively act against the MOVE house in Philadelphia. John Africa and his followers were foul and lawless, to be sure, but instead of traditional means, the police chief and the mayor came up with the bright idea of firebombing the building, killing all the occupants, including five children. That they also accidentally ignited the adjacent row houses and ended up burning down the entire neighborhood was an unfortunate bit of collateral damage. A similar thing happened when the ATF and the FBI surrounded David Koresh's compound in Waco, Texas. Rather than



wait them out—which might have taken months—they decided to push the siege to an end that resulted in that other notorious inferno.

Although both John Africa and David Koresh were so eccentric that their little bands were barely large enough to qualify as cults, the violence of their demise cost the involved law-enforcement officials their reputation as protectors of broad public interest. These two events galvanized a left-leaning resentment in the name of MOVE and an even more powerful right-leaning resentment in the name of Waco.

When I look back over the past year, I am glad that Saddam Hussein has been deposed, but I think we must also confront the longer sequence of devastation incurred in the name of his capture. In the first days of the war, a busy restaurant in an upscale Baghdad neighborhood was bombed, with heavy loss of civilian life, because Saddam Hussein was supposedly within. Palaces, mosques and historical sites were destroyed based on alleged sightings. And there have been firefights in crowded streets and marketplaces; homes riddled with bullets; and villages turned inside out.

Certainly there are models of urban crisis management here and abroad that have succeeded in restoring order, but they tend to rely on close community relations, officers who know a little something about the neighborhood (which surely assumes speaking the language) and some measure of police-citizen trust. I wonder if that is possible in Iraq given the cultural barriers, and particularly when our intrepid military leaders keep stating that humiliation educates, pain deters, fear brings peace, so bring 'em on, good riddance, it's our life versus theirs.

When I consider the new year, I wonder first about what will happen when our sharpshooting, traumatized urban warriors return home. We are still healing Vietnam vets, whose numbers are so disproportionate among the homeless and drug-addicted. Today, the military provides much more aggressive psychological diagnosis and support for veterans, but I can't help thinking about John Muhammad, the alleged Washington sniper, whose skills as a marksman were honed in the Army. War inevitably breaks minds as well as bodies.

Second, I worry that those Iraqis in the position of Roald Dahl's rabbits and badgers will become increasingly galvanized around the collateral losses we may be inflicting. I fear not only the coolly calculating Mr. Foxes of the world but those whose homes have been burned by accident, whose wives have been caught in the crossfire, whose children have been run over by tanks, whose husbands and brothers have been imprisoned or disappeared. Distraught kin do not necessarily care whether such loss is precautionary or whether our sins are fewer than those of the Baathists. They will be the ones most visibly insurgent and uncontrollably angry; they will be the ones, too, whose vanquishing will be all too easy. We must not mistake that for victory. Dragnetting the land for every creature that twitches the wrong way may indeed catch us a fox or two, but let us not be surprised if we eventually awaken a bear. ■

NAOMI KLEIN

The Year of the Fake

Don't think and drive.

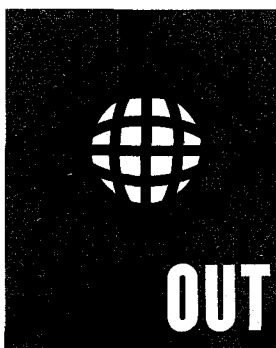
That was the message sent out by the FBI to roughly 18,000 law enforcement agencies on Christmas Eve. The alert urged police pulling over drivers for traffic violations, and conducting other routine investigations, to keep their eyes open for people carrying almanacs. Why almanacs? Because they are filled with facts—population figures, weather predictions, diagrams of buildings and landmarks. And according to the FBI Intelligence Bulletin, facts are dangerous weapons in the hands of terrorists, who can use them to “to assist with target selection and pre-operational planning.”

But in a world filled with potentially lethal facts and figures, it seems unfair to single out almanac readers for police harassment. As the editor of *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* rightly points out, “The government is our biggest single supplier of information.” Not to mention the local library: A cache of potentially dangerous information weaponry is housed at the center of almost every American town. The FBI, of course, is all over the library threat, seizing library records at will under the Patriot Act.

The blacklisting of the almanac was a fitting end for 2003, a year that waged open war on truth and facts and celebrated fakes and forgeries of all kinds. This was the year when fakeness ruled: fake rationales for war, a fake President dressed as a fake soldier declaring a fake end to combat and then holding up a fake turkey. An action movie star became governor and the government started making its own action movies, casting real soldiers like Jessica Lynch as fake combat heroes and dressing up embedded journalists as fake soldiers. Saddam Hussein even got a part in the big show: He played himself being captured by American troops. This is the fake of the year, if you believe the *Sunday Herald* in Scotland, as well as several other news agencies, which reported that he was actually captured by a Kurdish special forces unit.

It was Britain, however, that pushed the taste for fake to new levels. “Her main aim is to meet as many Nigerians as she can,” the Queen’s press secretary, Penny Russell, said of the monarch’s December trip to Nigeria. But just as Bush never made it out of the airport bunker in Baghdad, the Queen’s people decided it was too dangerous for her to mingle with actual Nigerians. So instead of the planned visit to an African village, the Queen toured the set of a BBC soap opera in New Karu, constructed to look like an authentic African market. During the “fake walkabout,” as the *Sunday Telegraph* called it, the Queen chatted with paid actors playing regular villagers, while actual villagers watched the event on a large-screen TV outside the security perimeter.

But 2003 was about more than embracing fakery and forgery—it was also about punishing truth-telling. The highest price was paid by David Kelly, the British government weapons expert who killed himself after he was outed as the source of a BBC story on “sexed up” security documents. Katharine Gun, a British intelli-



gence employee, faces up to two years in prison for revealing US plans to spy on UN diplomats in order to influence the Security Council vote on Iraq. And in the United States, Joseph Wilson, who told the truth about finding no evidence of Saddam’s alleged uranium shopping trip in Africa, was punished by proxy: His wife, Valerie Plame, was illegally outed as a CIA operative.

While truth did not pay in 2003, lying certainly did. Just ask Rupert Murdoch. According to an October study conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes, when it comes to the war in Iraq, regular watchers of Murdoch’s Fox News are the most misinformed people in America. Eighty percent of Fox News watchers believed either that weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq, that there is evidence of an Iraq–Al Qaeda link or that world opinion supported the war—or they believed all three of these untruths.

On December 19 the Federal Communications Commission gave Murdoch the right to purchase the top US satellite broadcaster, DirecTV. The FCC vote took place just five days before the FBI’s almanac bulletin, and they can best be understood in tandem: If books that fill your brain with facts make you a potential terrorist, then media moguls who fill your brain with mush must be heroes, deserving of the richest rewards.

When Bush came to office, many believed his ignorance would be his downfall. Eventually Americans would realize that a President who referred to Africa as “a nation” was unfit to lead. Now we tell ourselves that if only Americans knew that they were being lied to, they would surely revolt. But with the greatest of respect for the liar books (*Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*, *Big Lies*, *The Lies of George W. Bush*, *The Five Biggest Lies Bush Told Us About Iraq* et al.), I’m no longer convinced that America can be set free by the truth alone.

In many cases, fake versions of events have prevailed even when the truth was readily available. The real Jessica Lynch—who told Diane Sawyer that “no one beat me, no one slapped me, no one, nothing”—has proven no match for her media-military created doppelgänger, shown being slapped around by her cruel captors in NBC’s movie *Saving Jessica Lynch*.

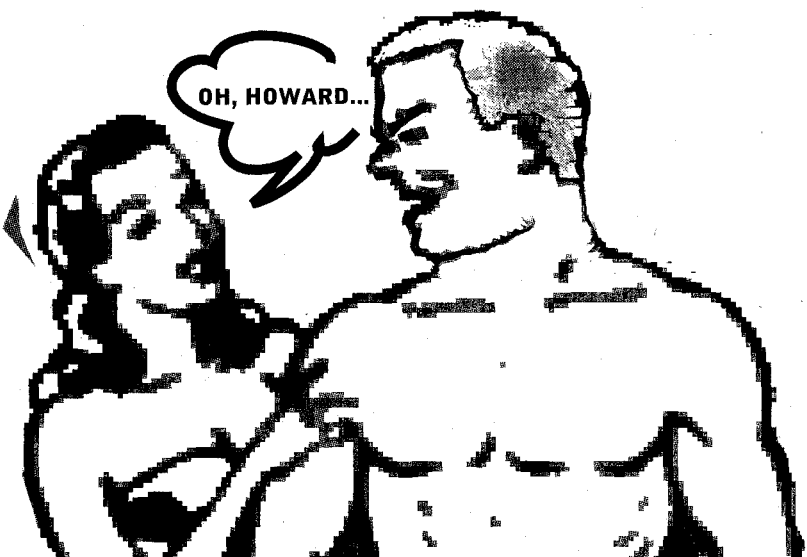
Rather than being toppled for his adversarial relationship to both the most important truths and the most basic facts, Bush is actively remaking America in the image of his own ignorance and duplicity. Not only is it OK to be misinformed, but as the almanac warning shows, knowing stuff is fast becoming a crime.

It brings to mind the story about why Castilian Spaniards pronounce *gracias* as “grathiath.” In the seventeenth century, the country was ruled by a monarch with a severe speech impediment and a fragile ego. To flatter the ruler, it was decreed that everyone should imitate the king’s lisp and mispronounce their c’s and s’s.

According to all reputable linguists, the legend is a complete fake. But in Bush’s America that should hardly matter. ■

ARTICLES

BUTCHING UP FOR VICTORY



When the ballot hits the box in New Hampshire, Howard Dean will be the one to beat. How did the former governor of a sparsely populated state become the Democratic front-runner? The usual explanation is that he sprang from the Internet and took to the skies with a series of propitious political alliances. That may account for Dean's current standing, but it's not why he stuck out from the pack almost from the moment he announced. Dean did it, as conservative columnist George Will notes, by "discern[ing] what liberals want: attitude."

It's also what attracted the media to Dean. A database search reveals that in December 836 newspaper pieces about him mentioned the a-word. Look beneath the surface of Dean's plucky, peppery attitude and you'll find the underlying reason for his success. He's butch—and many Democrats are convinced that's what it takes to beat George Bush.

Dean will have to do a lot more than man up to overcome the President's popularity. But if the polls tighten, gender presentation could make a decisive difference—as it did in 2000, when Al Gore's less-than-butch image cost him dearly. This is not to say that people vote on the basis of sexual fantasies alone, but the erotic aura that surrounds a candidate is a big part of that intangible quality called charisma. Today it isn't a matter of being tall, not too dark, and handsome; it's all about gender presentation.

Is she a real woman; is he a real man? These may be the most important questions in American politics today, precisely because

they are rarely asked. Pollsters don't measure a candidate's butch appeal, but political strategists do. And ever since Ronald Reagan rode roughshod over that wimp in the Mr. Rogers cardigan, the Republicans have played the gender card very effectively against the Democrats. From Bill Clinton's "rhymes with witch" wife to

Gore's obsession with earth colors, the party of give-'em-hell Harry has taken blow after blow to the primal parts. It's been a long

time since the Democrats had a presidential candidate who could jut out his chest and shoot from the hip with Dean's credibility. Maybe it's natural, maybe it's an act, but as even some Republicans are willing to admit, it seems to be working.

Peggy Noonan, who wrote speeches for Reagan, calls Dean "the it candidate"—not because of his policy positions but because of "sheer attitude." When Bill Moyers asked *Wall Street Journal* columnist Dorothy Rabinowitz what she thought of Dean, she launched into a meditation on his body: "He's got this jut-jawed face. He's got sort of the right posture. It's an absurd posture—that sleeves rolled up. But it works for mysterious reasons. All the mysterious reasons...you can't put your finger on." Women are freer to acknowledge what guys aren't supposed to notice (though they do): Dean has skillfully cast himself as a manly alternative to Bush's ripe macho. That's no mean feat for a dove.

Dean is the only major Democratic candidate to evade the sissifying barbs of the GOP's shock-jock surrogates. First, comely John Edwards was labeled "the Breck girl." (He trimmed his hair,

by **RICHARD GOLDSTEIN**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

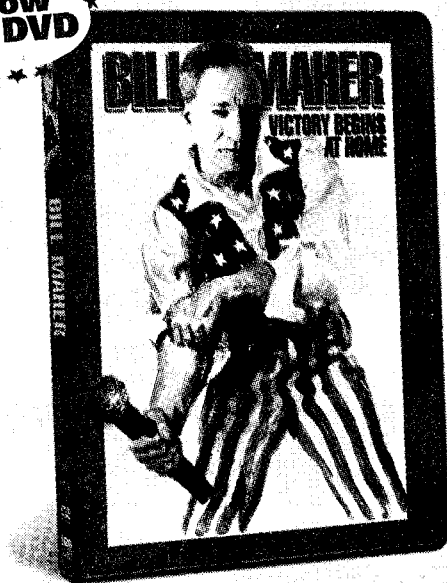
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to no avail.) When Edwards flagged and John Kerry emerged, he was dubbed "Mr. Ketchup," implying that his wife's fortune, and by extension Teresa Heinz Kerry herself, wears the pants in their manse. (Kerry hauled out a bomber jacket to signal his war record, but it resonated with the image of Michael Dukakis peering haplessly from the hatch of a tank.) Then came Wesley Clark in mufti barely concealing his stars and bars. After this writer compared Clark favorably to Ashley Wilkes, Rush Limbaugh jumped on the analogy, braying on about Clark's wimpiness while the theme from *Gone With the Wind* played in the background. As for Dick Gephardt, he has long labored under the burden of lacking eyebrows, making it hard for him to perform the requisite Dirty Harry stare. If he should somehow prevail, look for the Republicans to draw comparisons between his currently ample brows and their formerly faint state. If there's one thing wussier than lacking body hair, it's a transplant.

The butch issue explains why Dean's military record is such a hot potato. If it's true that he avoided service by pleading a bad back and then spent the next year skiing, that would be a ruse worthy of a weasel. Of course, Bush managed to overcome a shifty military record. Why are Republicans able to get away with the very flaws they pin on Democrats? The answer speaks to the enormous success GOP strategists have had in reaching voters on a symbolic level. The Republicans have adapted their Southern strategy to the new terms of sexual politics. What they once did with race, they are doing today with gender.

It's no surprise that the Republicans excel at this craft. The corporate class they draw from has had to think long and hard about the primal aspects of identification. Knowing how to manipulate sexual fantasies is crucial to the process of shaping consumer demand. With the same practiced expertise, the Republicans have stoked white male anxiety, positioning themselves as "the Daddy Party" while linking their competition with every attempt to deconstruct the patriarchy that feminism and queer theory devised. The Democrats have been caught in this well-laid trap. The more they reach out to good old boys, the more they risk alienating feminists and blacks; and the more they embrace liberal values, the more they lose straight white men. This is no minor quandary. White guys are 39 percent of the electorate, and by now only 22 percent of them identify as Democrats. To understand why the party of Roosevelt and Kennedy is in such parlous shape, you have only to look at how the dude vote has gravitated to the GOP.

At the neoliberal Democratic Leadership Council, this "white male problem" has become the subject of whole conferences. Dean may lambaste the DLC as "the Republican part of the Democratic Party," but he's borrowed page after page from its gender-politics playbook. Dean wasn't just whistling Dixie when he made his infamous remark about reaching out to bubbas bearing Confederate flags. Even when he apologized, he didn't back down from the agenda behind that comment. In cultivating the National Rifle Association, denying that he's a liberal, signaling his flexibility on affirmative action and insisting that he's not really for gay marriage (just civil unions), Dean is playing to pissed-off white guys.

Richard Goldstein is working on a book about masculinity in the face of feminism.

It's far from clear that this flirtation will succeed, since Dean is surrounded by the very people good old boys love to hate, starting with gay couples and antiwar activists. Still, Dean thinks he can win back a bloc of Reagan Democrats by addressing blue-collar issues (gingerly). He's certainly no Dennis Kucinich, in substance or style. As historian Douglas Brinkley told the *New York Times*, Kucinich echoes a time when heroic men projected "a gender-blend" of sensitivity and aggression. This "1960s version of masculinity" may be why Kucinich's short stature is often mentioned in the media, while Dean seldom gets that treatment, though he's not a lot taller. If Kucinich is a vegan, Dean acts like a man who likes his steak blood-rare and his politics cutthroat. These traits are part of his campaign to achieve symbolically what he can't quite carry off ideologically, by competing with Bush for the most potent compliment in American politics today: You the man!

A specter is haunting the White House. It is the specter of the young Clint Eastwood. Check him out in those Reagan-era bad-cop films and you'll see the origin of Bush's flinty glare. This President owes his mandate, such as it is, to his projection of macho. There's a reason why he's the first President in history to inspire an action-hero doll. (Decked out in a flight suit, he's ready to enchant 8-year-olds of all ages.) From Bush's taunting response to insurgents in Iraq—"Bring 'em on"—to the fighter-pilot drag he donned for that famous aircraft-carrier landing, he rarely misses a chance to wave his whopper, and not just figuratively. That flight suit had a distinctly bulbous crotch. It's no reach to think that Bush's handlers, so concerned about lighting and posing him, would pad his panache. That sort of gesture goes straight to the subconscious, an achievement any hidden persuader can be proud of.

Still, something about the President's swagger lends itself to parody. It looks as forced and fragile as it is. Molly Ivins, an acute student of Bush's persona, says it combines three strands of Texas culture: "religiosity, anti-intellectualism, and machismo. The machismo is what I think is fake." If conditions grow grim, the doubts about his masculinity that have haunted Bush throughout his political life will reappear. One reason Dean smells blood in Iraq is that a quagmire there will resonate with what Texans used to say about Dubya: "All hat and no cattle." In the macho imagination, nothing is worse than a belligerent claim that can't be supported. This is why the slogan of Bush's warship visitation—"Mission Accomplished"—is a potential liability for him and a gift to Dean.

Can a Democrat be an alpha male? The question hasn't come up on CNN, but it may be the hidden issue of the campaign. After decades of associating Democrats with failed masculinity, the Republicans are faced with an opponent who knows how to put on a butch display. They are trying to get around Dean's fight-back persona by portraying him as a dyspeptic, impetuous fool. Whether this negative spin will stick remains to be seen, but there's another a-word that pops up regularly in pieces about Dean: anger. The Republicans and their allies are trying to undercut his brashness by calling him reckless. Still, fist-waving hasn't exactly hurt Donald Rumsfeld. Ever since 9/11, nothing seems to be over

the top when it comes to macho in a pol. Think Arnold Schwarzenegger. His meteoric rise—despite a record of groping and degrading women—is ample proof that in American politics today Liberace's motto applies: "Too much is not enough!"

Why do we require macho magic from our leaders? The answer is primal, and therefore complex. But human nature is never the whole story when it comes to political behavior. To decipher the current leadership style, look to the conditions of American life.

In 1965 Richard Hofstadter wrote a landmark book called *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. Hofstadter noticed that, in the prosperous 1960s, class interests were giving way to an emphasis on group status. The breakup of the old racial and ethnic order intensified this trend by pitting every group against all the rest—and then came the demands of women and gays. These days, status conflicts are driven less by economic fears than by threats to the masculine mystique.

Most Americans have felt the pinch of stagnant or declining wages, but white men aren't doing especially badly. Only 18 percent of them earn less than \$30,000; a third make \$75,000 or more. If white guys lean Republican, material deprivation isn't the main reason. Their feeling of persecution derives from an entirely symbolic insult. The prestige of white macho has definitely taken a hit, and the resulting sense of loss moves

many issues. Take gun control. Despite the precipitate drop in crime, white men cling ever more tightly to their guns, and the right to lock and load is a major link between pistol-packing papas and the Republican Party. Assume that most of these guys cherish their weapons for other than practical reasons, and you can see the pull of the phallic on American politics.

Now factor in 9/11, with its gross insult to America's twin stiffies (soon to be replaced by an even taller "Power Tower," as the *New York Post* has dubbed it). Real as the danger of terrorism is, it has coincided with the so-called crisis of masculinity to produce a powerful perception that we need a strongman—rather than a strong person—in order to survive. The result is a politics of cartoon virility. But a symbol that doesn't meet actual needs soon seems like an empty artifice. That's what Dean is betting on. He's out to embody a masculinity that feels substantial rather than ceremonial. In other words, he's trying to be butch but not macho.

What is progressive masculinity? It has something to do with what the linguist George Lakoff calls "nurturant parenting." All the great liberal Presidents of the past century were nurturers (their weakness for war notwithstanding). But conservative leaders follow another model; Lakoff calls it "the strict father." The appeal of this harsh, punitive style is directly related to anxiety. People kept in a state of constant stress will sacrifice their best instincts and even their real interests for the illusion of safety—and sheer sexiness—that a bad dad can provide. That's why the Republicans put such energy into arousing anxiety and displacing it onto Democrats. If Dean is to beat the odds, he will have to counter this strategy in every move he makes.

It won't be easy. It doesn't take much to foment fear in white boys. What's more, as Al Sharpton reminds us, black voters aren't

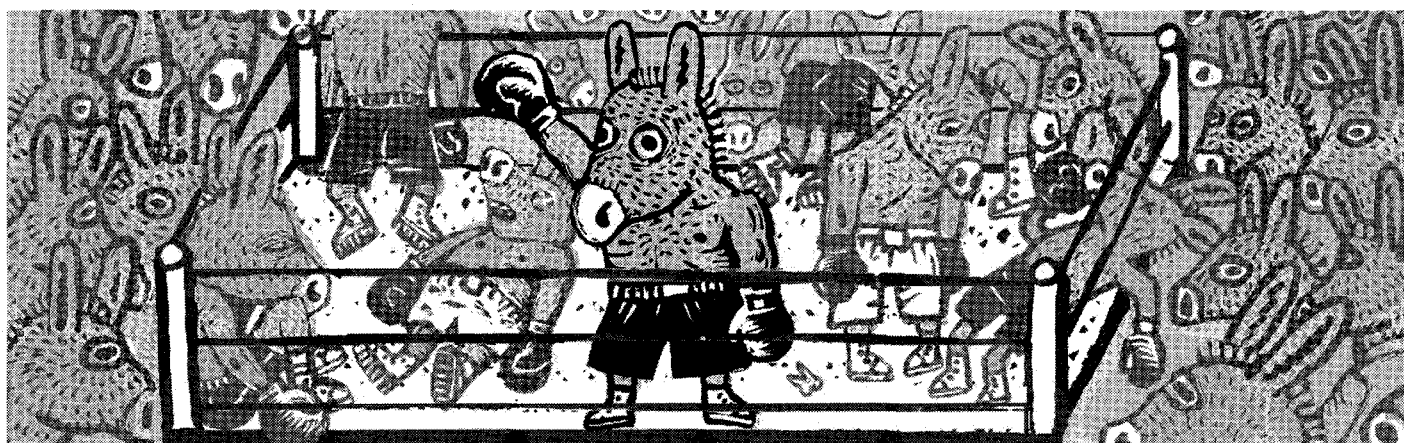
Can a Democrat be an alpha male? The question hasn't come up on CNN, but it may be the hidden issue of the coming campaign.

impressed by attitude that doesn't come with a progressive program. Then there's the chance that conquest and a patchwork "recovery" will prop up the illusion that things are getting better. This will be the mother of all long shots for the Democrats. Butchering up is no guarantee of victory. Still, for better or worse, it's a necessary step.

We may resent the fact that Americans regard the penis and its

symbolic projections as synonymous with strength. But psychic reality cannot be denied. At this moment, most voters are looking for a leader who reassures them with a manly presentation. The trick is to be a man women admire, blacks find credible and white guys bond with. It's a hard job, but someone's got to do it or Bush will ride the backlash to the White House—with a real mandate this time. ■

IOWA AND NEW HAMPSHIRE ARE IMPORTANT, BUT IT TAKES 2,162 DELEGATES TO WIN.



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Dean's Fifty-State Strategy

JOHN NICHOLS

Despite two months of often brutal battering from his foes in the contest for the Democratic presidential nomination—or perhaps because of it—Howard Dean remains well positioned to finish at or near the front of the pack in the first-in-the-nation Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary. Strong finishes in those high-profile contests, which Dean identified more than two years ago as critical to what was then an “impossible dream” candidacy, ought to provide tangible evidence that the former Vermont governor’s Internet-driven, decentralized and seemingly seat-of-the-pants campaign is, in fact, the real thing.

Even before anyone votes in Iowa and New Hampshire, however, Dean has already won the Jan Schakowsky primary. And that may be even more important to his nomination prospects. Schakowsky, an aggressive progressive who is one of the few grassroots organizers currently serving in Congress, does not live anywhere near Iowa or New Hampshire. She represents the northwest side of Chicago and liberal suburbs like Evanston, and she flexes her electoral muscles in the historically rough-and-tumble politics of Cook County, Illinois, not the farm country of the rural Midwest or the small towns of New England. The Illinois primary isn’t until March 16, two months after Iowa decides. So how could Schakowsky’s endorsement, which was barely noted outside her home state, possibly matter as much as the superhyped results from the first caucus and primary states?

The answer is that contests for the Democratic and Republican presidential nominations are not marathons run by dynamic con-

tenders who merely gather bursts of energy from good finishes in snowbound Iowa or New Hampshire and then develop what a losing contender for the 1980 GOP nod, George H.W. Bush, referred to as “the Big Mo.” It is important to remember that the momentum Bush I achieved with a surprise win in the Iowa caucuses that year was insufficient to overcome broad enthusiasm in state parties for the man he upset there, Ronald Reagan. Bush poured most of his energy into securing Iowa, but Reagan had a national network of supporters, and that made all the difference.

Rather than marathons, nomination contests are actually fifty state relay races. Momentum surely matters, but not as much as backing from local politicians and activists who take responsibility for winning state after state for the candidate who has secured their support. If Iowa or New Hampshire really were definitional, Estes Kefauver, Gary Hart and Dick Gephardt should have been Democratic nominees, while Pat Robertson, Pat Buchanan and John McCain should have carried the GOP banner. They all secured high-profile victories in New Hampshire primaries or Iowa caucuses only to find they lacked the support they needed in the other forty-eight states. Former California Governor Jerry Brown, who made three runs for the Democratic presidential nomination in three different decades, argues that it is this “state-by-state combat” that decides nominations, not showboating wins in Iowa or New Hampshire. “All fifty states send delegates to the convention,” says Brown. “When you start counting delegates, you understand that they all matter.”

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Of course, Dean wants to win Iowa and New Hampshire—and if late polls are to be believed, he could take both. But he doesn't want to be the Hart or McCain of the 2004 race; he wants to head the Democratic ticket. To that end, he and his aides have developed a fifty-state strategy designed to beat the field early and prevail later against the one or two who survive to challenge him in the big-state primaries of late February and early March, when most of the 4,322 delegates will be selected. With just weeks to go before the first votes are cast, one Democratic National Committee insider summed things up by saying, "The assumption now is that Dean will come out of Iowa and New Hampshire strong. That's not the question anymore. The question is, Who will emerge as the anti-Dean, the candidate who becomes the alternative and then fights it out with Dean in the later primaries?"

The search for an anti-Dean is not entirely motivated by ideological animus and political intrigue. It's true that much of the establishment, especially those tied to the corporate-funded Democratic Leadership Council, want to avert a Dean nomination to retain party influence. But it's also true that many who want to beat Bush sincerely doubt that Dean, a hotheaded candidate who is hardly consistent in his positions and who has a penchant for highly controversial statements and actions, is up to the task. This mix of concern for self-interest and national interest holds the promise of meaningful financial and strategic support for the candidate who emerges as the anti-Dean. All of Dean's major opponents are jockeying to be that man.

The Dean campaign is fully conscious of the game of Political Survivor that Dick Gephardt, John Kerry, Wesley Clark and the other contenders are playing. "[They] are reverting to a one- or two-state strategy and trying to throw up roadblocks of cash in our way," explained Joe Trippi, Dean's campaign manager. The Dean campaign raised a record \$15 million in the last quarter of 2003 and is working its base of more than 280,000 contributors to pile up the money it will take to counter the other contenders in the early states and the anti-Dean later on. But the Dean camp's secret weapon is human, not financial.

That's where Jan Schakowsky and prominent political players like her at the state and local level come in. Schakowsky, like the late Senator Paul Wellstone, is a savvy liberal who knows not only how to be right on the issues but also how to win elections. When she endorsed Dean she echoed most of his backers, saying she was drawn to him because of his antiwar stance and his willingness to "stake out the bold, clear opposition to the Bush Administration that Democrats have been hungering for." But there was also a practical side to her selection, as there has been for many of Dean's backers in the states. "I was attracted to the Dean campaign for the same reason I'm involved in politics," she says. "He's the only one who is talking seriously about empowering people, about attracting new people to the process. And he isn't just talking. I see it. I see the young people who are pouring their hearts and souls into this campaign. He's energizing and expanding the party's base."

Schakowsky made her endorsement in mid-December, as Dean was being savaged by 2000 Democratic vice-presidential nominee Joe Lieberman, onetime front-runner Kerry and the Washington chattering classes for failing to embrace fully Bush's claim that the

capture of Saddam Hussein had made the United States more secure. Did the harsh criticism cause her to hesitate? "Not at all," says Schakowsky. "The thing that struck me was that the other candidates seemed to be more interested in attacking Dean than figuring out how to win an election. It just emphasized to me that Dean is the one with the strategy, and that his strategy is working."

Schakowsky was not alone. As the other candidates were piling on with increasing ferocity—in hope that one of them might emerge as the "anti-Dean"—Dean quietly piled up one of the most impressive lists of pre-primary endorsements collected by a fresh Democratic contender since Bill Clinton began to work the phones in the fall of 1991. Dean never developed his equivalent to the "Friends of Bill" Rolodex; rather, most of his backers have been drawn to his campaign because they share his opposition to the Iraq war and buy his argument that Bush will only be beaten by a candidate who boldly challenges his agenda. Long before he

emerged as the front-runner, Dean was courting not just big names like Al Gore, Bill Bradley and *West Wing* actor Martin Sheen but also party officials and activists around

Representative Jan Schakowsky supports Dean because of his positions and his actions: 'He's energizing and expanding the party's base.'

the country. Dean's pitch was that he knows how to get the party out of the electoral rut it's been in since the insiders who now seek an anti-Dean positioned the party too close to Bush on the war and other issues for the comfort of core Democrats.

So it was that in December alone, Dean was backed not just by Schakowsky but by sixteen other House members, including Democratic Caucus chair Bob Menendez, Black Caucus chair Elijah Cummings and the dean of House progressives, John Conyers. Dean also collected the endorsement of New Jersey Governor James McGreevey, as well as of thirty-one state legislators and fourteen county party chairs in that state. The same day, he was endorsed by Puerto Rico's House representative, Anibal Acevedo Vila, chairman of the island's Democratic organization.

To be fair, other campaigns have attracted prominent backers. Gephardt has the endorsements of more than twenty international unions, Kerry is backed by several other senators and Wesley Clark is backed by many prominent elected officials. But it is notable that in December three times as many members of Congress endorsed Dean as endorsed the other eight candidates combined. By the end of the year, he had more commitments from superdelegates—top elected officials and state party leaders who are guaranteed delegate slots—than any other candidate. And in addition to high-profile endorsements from the Service Employees and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, he also won the backing of muscular unions at the state and local level, like the California teachers and veteran activists like United Farm Workers co-founder Dolores Huerta.

But how can broad support in Puerto Rico or the enthusiasm of California teachers compare with the marquee events of New Hampshire or Iowa? Quite favorably, it turns out. While the other campaigns have been calculating how to spin second-, third- or even fourth-place finishes in Iowa or New Hampshire into excuses for carrying on to the February primaries, Dean's campaign has been calculating how and where it will secure the backing of the 2,162 delegates needed to be nominated. In that calculus, it mat-

ters a great deal that Puerto Rico will send fifty-eight delegates to the July convention in Boston, two more than Iowa and thirty-one more than New Hampshire. And it certainly matters that, building on early support among gay and lesbian activists who got interested in him after he signed Vermont's civil union law, Dean has developed a strong base in California, which will choose more delegates in its March 2 primary than will be selected in Iowa, New Hampshire and the eight succeeding primaries and caucuses.

Much has been made of Dean's use of the Internet, but traditional politics may give him the edge. He has worked the phones, sat down for face-to-face meetings and restructured his schedule to win key endorsements. In August, while the other campaigns were virtually encamped in Iowa, New Hampshire and another early-primary state, South Carolina, Dean was jetting across the country on a "Sleepless Summer" tour that took him to delegate-rich states like Wisconsin, Washington, Oregon, Illinois and New York. The combination of the Internet and grassroots politics—you can now type in your ZIP code on the campaign's website and get directions to the nearest Dean house meeting—creates a potent mix that opens the process to Democrats who are usually left on the sidelines. That, in turn, impresses Democratic officials. "From the start, the Dean campaign has been saying every state matters, and I've seen how that energizes the party base in places that aren't usually organized this early in the process," explained Minnesota State Senator Scott Dibble after signing on as one of five Dean co-chairs in that state. "While everyone else is talking about Iowa and New Hampshire, Dean is saying, 'Look, I want to get things started in your state because your state is going to matter in the fight for the nomination and when it comes to beating Bush.'"

None of this means that Iowa and New Hampshire are irrelevant. These two states have become the boutiques of US politics. They provide candidates with narrowly defined and reasonably affordable storefronts in which to retail themes and tactics; they offer journalists easily comprehended contexts in which to observe contenders; and they winnow unwieldy fields down to manageable contests before the race finally plays out in the larger states. Iowa's caucuses attract a relatively small contingent of party activists, who tend toward New Deal economics and are dubious about military adventures abroad; New Hampshire voters like mavericks, especially if they are New Englanders. Most of these factors bode well for Dean, as does the penchant of voters in both states for the sort of direct contact that Dean—who has visited all ninety-nine of Iowa's counties—has lavished on them. Former Senator Gary Hart, who created the Iowa caucus phenomenon by focusing the 1972 campaign of George McGovern, which he was managing, on that state's then-obscure early delegate-selection process, and who won a critical New Hampshire primary in 1984, says that any serious presidential candidate who "meets or beats expectations in Iowa and New Hampshire" gets a chance to go on to the primaries where most of the delegates are actually chosen.

Dean will likely achieve the "meet or beat" standard. But no one is quite sure who will go on with him. A Dean win in Iowa would leave Gephardt with few options, just as a victory in New

Hampshire could hobble Kerry, his chief competitor there. Clark, who is not contending in Iowa, is putting a lot of energy into a late attempt to displace Kerry in New Hampshire. If Clark succeeds, he could be the anti-Dean. And with his stronger-than-expected fundraising and good poll numbers, Clark appears best positioned to assume that mantle. In all likelihood, however, the anti-Dean will not emerge fully formed before February 3, when Arizona, Delaware, Missouri, Oklahoma and South Carolina hold primaries and North Dakota and New Mexico have caucuses. North Carolina Senator John Edwards might limp to a victory in South Carolina, but it's doubtful that a narrow win would be sufficient to restart his floundering campaign. Clark and Lieberman have both poured time and energy into Oklahoma and Arizona, but recent polls suggest Dean, who has the backing of former Governor David Walters and former Senator Fred Harris in Oklahoma, and of former Governor Bruce Babbitt and US Representative Raul Grijalva

in Arizona, might win one or both of those states. Gephardt has made a play for North Dakota, but Dean has locked up the support of younger, more activist Democrats like

State Senator April Fairfield, who has made a name for herself as a crusading defender of family farmers and now tells voters that Dean will carry the cause to the White House.

It is still conceivable that piling on by his opponents will take a toll on Dean sufficient to make him vulnerable, or that the Vermonter's own inconsistencies will catch up with him. But if his foes are stymied at too many turns, the money will run out and Dean will start graciously accepting endorsements of the men who are now battering him. Even if an anti-Dean does emerge, that candidate will be battling in late-primary states like New York and California, where Dean looks to be strong. This does not necessarily mean, however, that Dean will finish the primary season without opposition. If a pattern has emerged in Democratic nominating contests of the past two decades, it is that after big-name, big-money challengers to the front-runner are knocked down, renegade candidates of the left have been able to soldier on to the convention. The Rev. Jesse Jackson did so in 1984 and 1988, as did Jerry Brown in 1992. Brown argues, from experience, that a candidate who can continue to run a low-budget campaign backed by a dedicated core of issue-driven supporters or a regional or ethnic base can stay in the running a lot longer than "the candidates who are addicted to spending a lot of money on television advertising."

Thus, it could be that the last anti-Dean running will be the Rev. Al Sharpton or Congressional Progressive Caucus co-chair Dennis Kucinich. One recent South Carolina poll had Sharpton winning 12 percent of the vote and running in a virtual tie for second with Edwards and Clark. Similarly, if Kucinich can best one or more of the media-designated major contenders in Iowa or New Hampshire, or in the February 17 Wisconsin primary, where his supporters have been very active, he could keep in the running through the March 2 California primary, where he has substantial support in the Bay Area. Stronger-than-expected showings by Sharpton or Kucinich would keep the pressure on Dean, whose record in Vermont was far more centrist than leftist, to stay true to a progressive message.

Much has been made of Dean's use of the Internet, but traditional politics—meeting voters, winning endorsements—may give him the edge.

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If Dean's fifty-state strategy gives him the delegate strength to obtain the nomination, it will still matter who the other delegates to the Democratic convention are pledged to support. If they are Democratic Leadership Council types elected on the slates of an anti-Dean contender backed by the party establishment, Dean will be under enormous pressure to neuter the progressive populist message that won him the enthusiastic support of elected officials

and activists across the country—and that holds out the best hope for expanding the electorate in a November run against Bush. If, on the other hand, he feels a pull from the left—in the form of significant numbers of delegates who arrive pledged to Sharpton or Kucinich, then Dean might actually end up challenging Bush as the candidate he has promised to be: the nominee of the democratic wing of the Democratic Party. ■

EXCHANGE

C O N T I N U E D

(Continued From Page 2)

transcribed, edited and annotated by Ernest May and Philip Zelikow. Likewise, the Johnson telephone conversations (which have been released in some instances in the last few months) provide new information on Johnson, McNamara and the Vietnam War. I believe that *The Fog of War* has used this information to shed new light on complex historical events.

Alterman was kind enough to inform me that he is writing the "definitive" book on the Gulf of Tonkin and the Cuban missile crisis. Interesting of him to decide this in advance of publication. Forgive me if I seem skeptical.

ERROL MORRIS

ALTERMAN REPLIES

New York City

■ It is with a heavy heart that I respond to the confusions, misunderstandings and mistaken allegations in Errol Morris's letter, as I greatly admire his work as a documentarian and intended my column on *The Fog of War* to reflect that admiration. Clearly, in the mind of Morris, I failed in this regard. So it now falls upon me to correct the angry and misplaced insinuations in his letter, one by one.

(1) Morris writes that I called his office saying that he needed to be "prepared to answer some difficult questions." This is apparently a mistaken transcription by his assistant. I said the questions were "complicated," which is why I did not want to leave a message about their content. All the questions I had for Morris dealt with the interviews he conducted with Robert McNamara addressing the issue of McNamara's false claim to have had secret "intercepts" proving that a second Gulf of Tonkin attack took place. This is a matter of considerable historical import because while McNamara now admits that there was no second attack, he has never explained what these secret intercepts showed that he insisted for decades proved the opposite. At the screening of *The Fog of War*, Morris informed me that he had questioned McNamara about these intercepts and had much material with regard to them that did not make it into the film. As a historian who is about to publish a book dealing with this matter, I was naturally eager to see them. Alas, during the course of our phone conversation, Morris told me that he did not have any such material. If only...

(2) Morris complains that my view of the Johnson/McNamara relationship "is not compatible with recently released historical docu-

mentation." I beg to differ. Morris points to a couple of transcripts of phone conversations he says prove his point. What I told him was that I could point to probably dozens of other conversations and historical documentation that prove the opposite. Since he is not trained as a historian, Morris lacks the ability to weigh the value of one conversation against another, considering context, hidden motives and persons present. No one in American history requires more careful treatment in that regard than those two pathological liars Lyndon Johnson and Robert McNamara. I see from his letter, for instance, that Morris has relied for his research on the edited transcripts of Philip Zelikow and Ernest May. I assume he means Ernest R. May and Philip Zelikow, eds., *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*. As any historian who kept up with the debates on the topic could have informed him, this is a serious mistake. Sheldon Stern, former chief archivist in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, notes in his superb new study, *Averting "The Final Failure": John F. Kennedy and the Secret Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings*, that these transcripts are "marred by serious errors." A far more accurate rendering of the transcripts of the tapes can be found in *The Presidential Recordings: John F. Kennedy: Volumes 1-3, The Great Crises*, Philip Zelikow, Timothy Naftali and Ernest May, eds. For Stern's original critique, Morris should consult "What JFK Really Said," *Atlantic Monthly* (May 2000); and Sheldon Stern, "The 1997 Published Transcripts of the JFK Cuban Missile Crisis Tapes: Too Good to Be True?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (September 2000).

(3) Morris is mistaken, once again, when he says I read him conversations that took place in early 1965. The two I remember quoting to him took place on the same day in May 1964, more than sixty days before the Tonkin Gulf incidents. In one, Johnson tells his Adviser for National Security Affairs, McGeorge Bundy, "I stayed awake last night thinking of this thing.... It looks to me like we're getting into another Korea.... I don't think that we can fight them 10,000 miles away from home.... I don't think it's worth fighting for. And I don't think that we can get out. It's just the biggest damned mess that I ever saw." When Bundy replies that he too thinks it an "awful mess," Johnson volunteers that he'd been observing his valet, Kenneth Gaddis, that day, a man with "six little old kids, and he's getting out my things. And I just thought about ordering his kids in there. And what in the hell am I ordering

him out there for? What the hell is Vietnam worth to me?... What is it worth to this country?" Johnson continues, "It's damned easy to get in a war but it's gonna be awfully hard to ever extricate yourself if you get in." In the other, Johnson tells Richard Russell, powerful chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee who was also (unlike McNamara) urging him to avoid the "quicksand" of Vietnam, that he does not "think the people of the country know much about Vietnam and I think they care a hell of a lot less." Had I been more on the ball, I would also have read him the June 1964 conversation in which Johnson notes that he is hearing advice that might justify a withdrawal, and McNamara immediately counters—"pressing very hard" in the judgment of historian Michael Beschloss—"I just don't believe we can be pushed out of there, Mr. President. We just can't allow it to be done. You wouldn't want to go down in history as having—" The President interrupts, in accord, "Not at all." There are plenty more of these, alas.

(4) Morris also mischaracterizes my words regarding James Galbraith's *Boston Review* article. I did not say I had read "other articles" by Galbraith. I said I had read what I understood to be another version of the same article in *Salon* that he had read in the *Review*, but that I would check to make sure. Indeed, I did.

(5) And Morris mischaracterizes my remarks about my own work. I would never (no decent historian ever should) characterize my book as the "definitive" study of anything. Regarding the Gulf of Tonkin I may have recommended that Morris take a look at Edwin Moise's study *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*, which I take to be definitive until something better comes along. The historiography of the Cuban missile crisis is so vast and rapidly expanding that I hesitate to recommend a single book, but I do think Morris's understanding of the crisis could be enhanced by consulting the work of Barton Bernstein, Mark White, Raymond Garthoff, Timothy Naftali and Alexandr Fursenko, Philip Zelikow, as well as the aforementioned Stern. I never claimed that my own modest contribution will be "definitive." It will, however, be improved if Morris shares with me the material he promised to send that will allow me to weigh his own historical discoveries against my eleven years of research. I look forward to receiving these materials so that my work might reflect Morris's substantial contribution to the historical record—our differences of interpretation notwithstanding.

ERIC ALTERMAN

COMMENT

(Continued From Page 7)

angry Democratic staff of the Judiciary Committee. Three of the twenty or so are clearly contenders for the "worst of the worst."

Brett Kavanaugh has no judicial experience and, at 38, would be one of the youngest members in the history of the Court of Appeals for the Washington, DC, Circuit—the bench that sent Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas directly to the Supreme Court. Kavanaugh is the principal author of Ken Starr's prurient final report to Congress on President Clinton. He drafted the grounds for impeachment and, after leaving the independent counsel's office, went to work at Starr's law firm, Kirkland & Ellis.

Kavanaugh has never participated in a trial. In his Judiciary Committee questionnaire, he was asked to list his ten most significant cases; four of those he cited did not even involve a courtroom appearance, and in two he merely filed a Supreme Court amicus curiae brief for a third party. Most recently, Kavanaugh has worked in the White House selecting Bush's judicial nominees, coordinating the unsuccessful nominations of Estrada and Priscilla Owen.

When he worked for Ken Starr, Kavanaugh spent a lot of his time trying to challenge President Clinton's assertions of executive privilege. But one of his jobs in the Bush White House has been to defend claims of executive privilege. Kavanaugh has blocked a Senate committee from getting to see Enron-related documents, and he wrote the executive order that blocked the release of presidential papers, despite a federal law requiring that they be made public after twelve years.

Meanwhile, a coalition of environmentalists, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the Alliance for Justice and the National Congress of American Indians is urging full investigation of alleged ethical improprieties by William Myers before hearings are scheduled for his nomination to the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. As the solicitor for the Interior Department, Myers has participated in a series of decisions favorable to cattle, mining and timber interests, and damaging to public lands and Native American tribes. Even before he was nominated, environmentalists had filed an ethics complaint against him, accusing him of violating his recusal agreement by meeting with his former lobbying and legal clients. Of all the Bush Cabinet agencies, Interior is probably in the deepest collusion with special interests and campaign donors. But these politicized decisions tend to be administrative regulations so technical, obscure and localized in the West that they don't get on the national radar screen. For example, last March, the Interior Department gave notice that it was proposing weakening grazing regulations adopted by the Clinton Administration and upheld by the Supreme Court. As a lawyer and lobbyist, Myers had been active in challenging these same regulations.

Myers also wrote two separate law review articles defending Judge Robert Bork and attacking the Senate for rejecting Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court.

A third horror in the pipeline is Claude Allen, awaiting renomination to the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit and now the Deputy Secretary for Health and Human Services. Allen has supported antichoice statutes and regulations; urged sexual abstinence as the solution to AIDS and teen pregnancy; and opposed expanded health insurance for poor children. Allen has been involved in Republican politics for many years. In fact, Allen, who

is African-American, was Jesse Helms's press secretary during Helms's racist campaign for re-election in 1984.

Bush is trying to transform America through lifetime judicial appointments for this biased batch and their clones. The bottom line is that the reckless Bushies are willing to violate computer privacy and vandalize the Bill of Rights to expedite this transformation. George W. Bush was appointed President by the Supreme Court after losing the popular vote by more than 500,000. Now he is trying to use the courts to legislate a mandate the voters never gave him by abusing the power of appointment and ignoring the Constitution's "advise and consent" clause. JACK NEWFIELD

Jack Newfield, a senior fellow of the Nation Institute, is the editor of the just-published anthology American Rebels (Nation Books).

In Fact...

TRACING CHARLES HORMAN'S KILLER

■ Peter Kornbluh writes: More than thirty years after the military putsch in Chile, there has finally been an arrest for one of the Pinochet regime's most infamous crimes: the murder of North American journalist Charles Horman. On December 10 Chilean judge Jorge Zepeda Arancibia indicted and detained former intelligence agent Rafael Gonzalez as an "accomplice to the crime of homicide." Gonzalez, as readers who saw the Oscar-winning Hollywood film *Missing* may remember, is the same official who told reporters from CBS and the *Washington Post* in 1976 that Horman had been killed because "he knew too much," presumably regarding the US role in Chile. Now, justice in the case hinges on how much Gonzalez knows, and is willing to reveal, about those who gave and carried out the orders to execute Horman in the days following the US-backed coup.

ISRAELI REFUSENIKS SENTENCED

■ Neve Gordon writes: On January 4 an Israeli military court sentenced five refuseniks, Noam Bahat, Haggai Matar, Adam Maor, Shimri Zameret and Matan Kaminer, to one year in jail for refusing to serve in the military. The judges declared that the five conscientious objectors deserved to be harshly punished, since they questioned the morality of the military's actions and challenged the legitimacy of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The refuseniks admitted that this was their intention, adding that they will continue to challenge the occupation [see Jonathan Shainin, "Letter From Israel," January 19]. The severity of the sentence—which does not take into account the period the COs have already served—exposed yet again the moral bankruptcy of the Israeli military: COs are imprisoned for more than two years, while not a single soldier has been convicted of wrongful killing since the intifada's outbreak, a period during which 113 Palestinian children under the age of 12 have been killed. The Israeli refusenik movement has called upon the international community to send faxes (972-3-569-2933) to Brig. Gen. Gil Regev, who has the authority to revoke the sentence. A petition for the immediate release of the five conscientious objectors can be accessed at www.refuz.org.il.

Lenny From Heaven

Lenny Bruce, the potty-mouthed wit who turned stand-up comedy into social commentary, was posthumously pardoned yesterday by Gov. George E. Pataki, 39 years after being convicted of obscenity for using bad words in a Greenwich Village nightclub act. The governor said the posthumous pardon was "a declaration of New York's commitment to upholding the First Amendment."

—The New York Times

LENNY: So dig this: George Pataki pardons me thirty-seven years after I died. The schmuck has some gall. "Freedom of speech," he says—I got the clip right here—"is one of the greatest American liberties, and I hope this pardon serves as a reminder of the precious freedoms we are fighting to preserve as we continue to wage the war on terror." This is a politician who *kvells* over the USA Patriot Act! Now the putz drafts me in the war on terrorism! He wants comedians to be able to go on stage and yell "Fuck Osama!" Hey, I wonder if Georgie boy cleared this with John Ashcroft? That cat's not too cool with the four-letter words. He shmeers Mazola oil on himself before praying. I can just see Pataki clearing it with Ashcroft...

"(Noo Yawk accent) Yo, John, George Pataki... God bless you too, John.... No I can't get down on my knees right now. I'm sitting behind this big desk in Albany. Can I take a rain check on that prayer?... Great. Reason I called is I'm going to pardon Lenny Bruce and I thought I'd give you a heads up. A bunch of these liberal lawyers are after me, so I got to cover my New York City ass—you know what I'm sayin'?... Lenny Bruce is the comedian who was busted for using four-letter words in a nightclub act back in 1964.... No, John, I don't think pardoning him will encourage children to use four-letter words and cause them to go to Hell.... The religious right?—the hell they care? He's been dead for thirty-seven years. He's not gonna resurrect anytime soon.... OK, tell you what I'll do. You been takin' a lot of flak about the Patriot Act, right? Trampling civil liberties and all that crap. So I'll issue a proclamation that ties the pardon to support for the war on terrorism and support for free speech. So we have it both ways! I'm upholding the Patriot Act and also the precious freedoms our boys are fighting for in Baghdad, blah blah blah.... I knew you'd love it. Thanks, John, I'll pray for you too.... God bless you too, John."

You know this posthumous-pardon bit could catch on. Save the death penalty. You fry an innocent guy, then you pardon him!

"(Texas accent) The State of Texas regrets to announce that we executed an innocent man last week. A DNA test just in proves that the pubic hair found on the victim did not belong to Jermyn Johnson, the unfortunate executionee. Our investigation has determined that the pubic hair actually came from a Coke can belonging to Justice Clarence Thomas. The Great State of Texas apologizes to the family and friends of Jermyn Johnson and grants him a full pardon. Your Department of Corrections regrets the inconvenience."

Man, you know the pardon that took the longest? That was the Catholic Church springing the Jews for killing Christ. Yeah, the Pope finally admitted it was a bad rap and apologized. The Inquisition? Big mistake. "Sorry, guys, but conditions were different in the 1400s. The Jews didn't have a lot of smart lawyers to get them off like today."

by Richard Lingeman

So that's how the pardon came about. The Jews hired themselves a good mouthpiece who took their case to John Paul II:

POPE: (*buzzer sounds*) Yes?

SECRETARY'S VOICE: Your Holiness, there's a Mr. Finklestein to see you. He has an appointment.

POPE: Finklestein? Doesn't ring a bell. (*Rings a bell. Singsong chant*) *In nomine Patris et Filii et...*

VOICE: Your Holiness, you're wandering again. This man wants to see you. His card says Feinstein, Finklestein, Debevoise and Plimpton. He says he's representing the Jewish people.

POPE: Oh yeah, I remember. Send him in. *Kvetch, kvetch, kvetch.* That's all those people do. Ah, Mr. Finklestein. Velcome to the Wat-ican. Or wherever. How can I help you? A glass of sacramental wine?

FINKLESTEIN: No thank you, Your Holiness. I'll get down to business. Time is money. I bill \$400 an hour.

POPE: Well, your people wrote the book on that! Just kidding, counselor.

FINKLESTEIN: As you know, I am handling the case of *Original Tribes of Israel, LP, v. Church of Simon Called Peter, Inc.* My clients believe they have been deeply hurt, injured, libeled and otherwise persecuted as a result of anti-Semitic doctrines propagated with malice and reckless disregard of the truth by defendants and specifically that said defendants accused plaintiffs of crucifying the said Messiah *a k a* Jesus Christ *a k a* Our Lord and Savior, on or about Easter Sunday 1 Anno Domini...

POPE: (*singsong chant*) *Anno domini pax vobiscum rick santorum*—oh, sorry, reflex action...

FINKLESTEIN: No problem. And furthermore, the second part of our complaint, alleges *ex parte*...

POPE: (*chanting*) *Nostrum rostrum summum bonum sonny bono*... Oops, there I go again...

FINKLESTEIN: In the second part, my clients charge that the Catholic Church is in violation of copyright in that it did steal the teachings of Jesus of Galilee, a prominent Jewish person, and his twelve disciples, including Simon called Peter, authors Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, all of them Jewish persons, and Paul of Tarsus, also a Jew, and wrongfully converted them into what is known as the Christian religion. We demand \$50 trillion in punitive damages for copyright infringement plus 10 percent in royalties off the collection plate.

POPE: Ooh, that's pretty rich. Can't we settle out of court? How about if I pardon you all. I'll even go to Israel and do it personally. I'll say, Boy, when we make a mistake it's a doozy.

(*Clap of thunder*)

JEHOVAH: Leonard, this routine is over the line. I told you nix on the blasphemy in the afterlife! For this little caper you draw another millennium in Purgatory.

LENNY: *Oy gevalt*, busted again!

BOOKS & THE ARTS

A Magical Realist and His Reality

PERRY ANDERSON

LIVING TO TELL THE TALE.

By Gabriel García Márquez.

Translated by Edith Grossman.

Knopf. 484 pp. \$26.95.

As ways of writing about a past, memoirs and autobiographies, although in practice they may often overlap, are different undertakings. At the limit, a memoir can re-create a world lavishly peopled with others, while saying very little about the author himself. An autobiography, on the other hand, may take the form of a pure portrait of the self; the world and others featuring only as *mise en scène* for the inner adventure of the narrator. In recounting their lives, novelists have produced bravura performances in both genres. Among modern writers, Anthony Powell's *To Keep the Ball Rolling*—four leisurely yet laconic volumes—offers a masterpiece of the first form. Sartre's brief book *The Words* is perhaps the greatest example of the second. Gabriel García Márquez's *Living to Tell the Tale* is billed by its publishers as a memoir, and there is little doubt that on the whole it falls to that side of the divide. García Márquez is a legendary storyteller. But he also has an acutely self-reflective intelligence, as a glance at *The Fragrance of Guava*, his biographical conversations with Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza of twenty years ago, shows.

In *Living to Tell the Tale*, García Márquez exercises this side of his gifts very sparingly. By artistic choice he has instead constructed a memoir as close in form to a novel as perhaps has ever been written. It opens with the arrival of his mother in Barranquilla, to take her son—then 22—back with her to sell the family house in Aracataca, on the trip that made him the novelist he became; and ends with the ultimatum he wrote on a plane to Geneva, five years later, that made the elusive sweetheart of his adolescence his future wife. Between these two

parallel *coups de théâtre* the author recounts his life up to the point when he left Colombia in 1955, in a narrative that obeys not the untidy patterns of experience or memory, with all their unevenness, but rules of a perfectly symmetrical composition. The book is divided into eight chapters of virtually identical length, an arrangement that least corresponds to the way any life is actually lived, as if to underline that we are in the presence of another supreme artifice.

From the start, García Márquez has practiced two relatively distinct styles of writing: the figurally charged prose already on brilliant display in his earliest fiction, *Leaf Storm*, which was rejected for publication at the time, with the concession that it was “poetic”; and the objective concision of such tales as *No One Writes to the Colonel* or reportages like *News of a Kidnapping*. If technically the register of *Living to Tell the Tale* lies somewhere be-

Living to Tell the Tale, the first volume of García Márquez's memoirs, has the crisp, sumptuous grandeur of his major novels.

tween the two, the tone and effect of the whole—this follows from the conception of the memoirs—have the crisp, sumptuous grandeur of his major novels. We are in the world of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* or *The General in His Labyrinth*, with its metaphoric density and trademark dialogue: lofty one-liners that function like near-epigrams of inimitable pungency and good-humored irony.

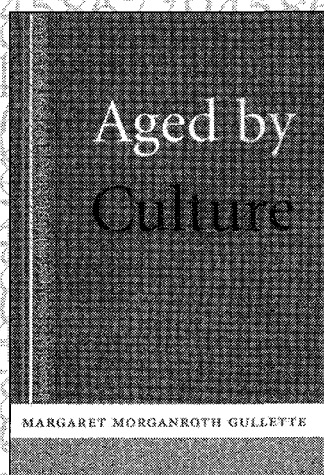
Formally, what we are told is the tale of García Márquez's youth in Colombia. Vivid portraits of his grandparents and parents establish the strangest of family settings. We are then given his childhood, up to the age of 8, with his grandfather in the banana zone of the Caribbean coast; early school days in poverty in Barranquilla, and holidays in a more Edenic hinterland; passage up the Magdalena River to an Andean liceo; entry into university at Bogotá; an eyewitness description of the apocalyptic

Perry Anderson teaches history at the University of California, Los Angeles.

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riots in the capital after the assassination of the country's leading populist politician, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán; flight from the conflagration back to the coast; early journalism in Cartagena; literary enthusiasm and bohemian dissipation in Barranquilla again; finally a regular reporter's job in Bogotá, and dispatch abroad to cover the Geneva Conference of 1955. All this with a wealth of striking incident, intriguing detail and flamboyant chance that few works of fiction could equal.

Yet its sum is not a *Bildungsroman* of the author, whose personality is rarely frontlit, but the re-creation of an astonishing universe, the Caribbean coastlands of Colombia in the first half of the last century. Anyone who might think that a factual counterpart of García Márquez's fictions could be at best only a pallid duplicate can be reassured. Scene after remarkable scene, character after arresting character, cascades of gestures without measure and coincidences beyond reason make *Living to Tell the Tale* a cousin of the great novels. This first volume of what is likely to be García Márquez's final enterprise is a major, meditated edifice of literary imagination. It is tempting therefore to read it simply as a work of art, independently of its status as a biographical document.

That would diminish its interest, however. One way of seeing why this is so is to consider its relationship to the memoirs of the Latin American writer most often associated with García Márquez, and second only in fame to himself. Mario Vargas Llosa's *A Fish in the Water*, published more than a decade ago, has a less conventional structure. Written in the aftermath of the defeat of his candidacy for the presidency of Peru in 1990, it consists of chapters alternating between the writer's childhood and youth in his native country, and his campaign to become its leader when he was in his 50s—a switching device he has used more than once in his fiction, from *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* to the current *The Way to Paradise*. Within this form, the three years of his presidential campaign take up more space than the twenty-two years of his passage to adulthood. That alone makes it a very different kind of memoir from García Márquez's. All the more striking, then, are the resemblances between their early experiences, in many respects uncannily close.

Both writers spent their crucial first years as small boys under the roof of an adoring grandfather, the patriarch of the family—a civil war veteran in Colombia, a planter and prefect in Bolivia/Peru. Their fathers, who had similar jobs (a telegraph operator, a radio operator) and made simi-

lar marriages (against in-law resistance, above their station), were absent: blank positions in the emotional structures of childhood, in which even mothers played a secondary role. Sexual initiation came early, in brothels about which each writes with wry affection. Later, each married a hometown girl. As adolescents, both were sent against their will to boarding schools by their fathers. Each was happily formed in the provinces, and experienced arrival in the capital as a misfortune.

At university, both plunged into a side-life of journalism and nocturnal carousal. Each turned a hand to radio soap operas, even inspired by the same tear-jerker—Felix B. Caignet's *The Right to Be Born* (no anachronistic pro-life connotations). In both cases, the great literary discovery of their youth was Faulkner, whose novels they report marking them more deeply than any other. Each ends his memoir of those years at the same fateful point, as the writer—having just learned something of the unknown interior of the land (El Chocó, Amazonas)—leaves his native country for Europe, never to fix his residence there again.

A set of parallels like these is an invitation to some future Plutarch of Latin American letters. Yet what they serve to throw into relief are finally the contrasts between the two novelists, and their memoirs. For all the similarities in their family constellations, Vargas Llosa came—on his mother's side—from a more privileged social background, a clan of the Arequipa elite that produced Peru's first postwar president, Bustamante y Rivero. Class and color situated him higher up the social scale, in what was also a more rigidly racist society, than a mestizo boy would be in Colombia. Formal education, too, separated them. García Márquez explains how thoroughly disaffected he was from his studies at university, where his father had insisted he take law, and he eventually dropped out. Vargas Llosa, on the other hand, had a brilliant student *cursus*, becoming an assistant to a leading local historian in Lima before even graduating. The university was a central experience for him, whereas it meant nothing to García Márquez. That difference explains why Vargas Llosa got to Europe so much earlier in his career, with a scholarship to Madrid. So, too, once in Europe, he has never really left it, living essentially in Paris, London and Madrid, with trips back to Lima; while as a journalist García Márquez soon returned to Latin America, and would ultimately settle in Mexico.

These divergent trajectories have their

atmospheric correlates in the work of each. In their lifetimes, the histories of their two countries—measured in terms of slaughter, repression, frustration, corruption—could hardly have been grimmer, and these of course find expression in their novels. But García Márquez's depictions of his homeland, even at its worst, are infused with a lyrical warmth, an immutable love, that has no counterpart in Vargas Llosa's world, where the writer's relationship to the land of his origins is always tense and ambiguous. Part of the reason for this difference can be found in their individual situations. For if the configuration of the two families from which they came was strikingly similar, their emotional voltage was quite opposite.

García Márquez's mother, of whom he paints a loving portrait, was clearly a woman of great strength of character, capable of managing her spirited, if wayward, husband and eleven children, in penury or precarious prosperity alike. Vargas Llosa's father, abandoning his spouse without a word when she was five months pregnant, and appearing out of the blue ten years later to repossess her and shanghai him, was by contrast a traumatic nightmare: feared by his wife and hated by his son. Showing no attachment to his native land, he eventually immigrated to the United States, dying a janitor in Pasadena.

Even the melodramas of the early sexual experience of the two writers, set pieces of Latin honor and outrage, reflected this contrast. When Vargas Llosa married his aunt—in this semi-deracinated family, not coincidentally a Bolivian—his father, after brandishing a revolver, denounced him to the police in Lima and threatened to kill him with five bullets like a rabid dog. García Márquez, caught in *flagrante* with the black wife of a policeman in the backlands, was faced with a pistol too, and the words "cheating in bed is settled with lead." But the affronted sergeant let the terrified boy off with a humiliation, as thanks for a medical service from his father, and when last seen is drinking with him. The two scenes, each set pieces of a theatrical machismo, speak in their way of differing societies. The poetry and humanity of the Colombian episode capture the general spirit of *Living to Tell the Tale* and the ties of its author with the community in which he grew up, whereas the title of *A Fish in the Water* inverts the story it actually tells. This is more accurately conveyed by its first draft, released as *A Fish Out of Water*, a reversal that is not the least oddity of Vargas Llosa's memoir as a whole. Composed at a moment of acute political disappointment, and inevitably somewhat discolored by it,

the book is nevertheless shot through with a detestation of much in Peruvian life that clearly expresses feelings of long standing.

The literary consequences of this difference are not what might be expected. The—now shopworn—label of "magical realism" is customarily applied to García Márquez's novels. It has never fitted Vargas Llosa, who disavows the adjective. "I have an invincible weakness for so-called realism," he remarks in *A Fish in the Water*. One of the most significant contrasts between their fiction follows from—or perhaps dictates—these distinct options. The bulk of Vargas Llosa's work is set in the Peruvian present, con-

temporary with his own experience. The principal exceptions are displacements, not just of time but of space—the Brazil of *The War of the End of the World*, or the France and South Seas of *The Way to Paradise*. Within his own country, he has been unwaveringly *à la page*. None of García Márquez's major novels, on the other hand, represent the epoch in which he himself became a writer. Macondo vanishes in the Great Depression. The patriarch belongs to the rustic world of Juan Vicente Gómez, who ruled Venezuela from 1908 to 1935. The time of cholera is Victorian. The general expires as the Restoration ends. Mo-

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dernity is allergic to magic: García Márquez's powers have always needed a recession into the past to be exercised with full freedom.

In the public mind, what probably distinguishes the two writers most are conventional images of their politics—García Márquez, friend of Fidel; Vargas Llosa, devotee of Thatcher: figures respectively of an ecumenical left and a neoliberal right. That polarity exists, of course. But if one looks at the writing, rather than the affiliations, another contrast is more striking. Vargas Llosa was from the beginning, and has remained, a political animal. As a student in Lima under the Odría dictatorship, he was an active Communist militant, inducted into the party by Héctor Béjar, who would lead the first Peruvian guerrilla movement in the 1960s; and after arriving in Europe, he steeped himself in Marxist theory as an enthusiast for the Cuban Revolution. When he broke with the left over Cuba in the early 1970s, he did not simply retreat into literature, as did others, but became a passionate admirer of Hayek and Friedman, and a leading advocate of free-market capitalism in Latin America. His run for the presidency of Peru, with the support of the traditional right, was not a sudden caprice but the outcome of a decade of consistent public activity. Logically, his fiction—from his earliest depiction of the military academy in *The Time of the Hero* through the revolutionary conspiracies of *Conversation in the Cathedral* or *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta* to the recent *The Feast of the Goat*—takes contemporary political conflicts directly as an organizing theme.

This has never been the case with García Márquez, and *Living to Tell the Tale* helps to explain why, though patches of mystery remain. He depicts a youngster, coming from the coast to the highlands in his teens, so absorbed in literary matters—at first poetry, above all—as to have virtually no interest in public affairs. Colombia was already in a state of high political tension in his last school years, and just as he arrived at university, the country descended into civil war. The single most powerful chapter of *Living to Tell the Tale* contains a Goyaesque panorama of the social earthquake that engulfed Bogotá when Gaitán, its most popular politician, was murdered in 1948. From his *pension* three blocks away, García Márquez rushed to the scene, arriving to witness the lynching of the assassin and the outbreak of the tidal wave of rioting and looting that swept the city. But his reaction,

as he records it, was simply to go back to the boardinghouse to finish his lunch. Meeting him on the street, an older relative—who became one of the leaders of the revolutionary junta that tried to steer the turmoil into an uprising against the Conservative government—urged him to participate in the student protests against the murder. In vain. Terrified by the wholesale destruction and killings of the next days, when the army moved into the city to restore order, his one desire was to escape.

The *Violencia*, which ravaged Colombia for the next decade, pitting Liberals against the ruling Conservatives, took 300,000 lives—a catastrophe worse than any endured in Peru. This was the historical back-

Wrapped up in discoveries and experiments of the imagination, the young García Márquez effectively ignored the fate of his country.

ground to García Márquez's early career as a journalist and writer. But he seems to have remained eerily untouched by it. Although a regular columnist for a Cartagena daily, he writes that "in my political obfuscation at the time, I did not even know that martial law had been reimposed in the country." In Barranquilla, a little later, "the truth of my soul was that the drama of Colombia reached me like a remote echo and moved me only when it spilled over into rivers of blood." The confession is disarming but the distinction untenable: Colombia's drama was the spilling of rivers of blood. The reality seems to have been that in these years the young *littérateur*, entirely wrapped up in discoveries and experiments of the imagination, effectively ignored the fate of his country.

This was easier to do in the coastal cities, since the Caribbean littoral, although not immune to sectarian killing, was spared the worst of the *Violencia* raging along the coffee frontiers of the highlands. García Márquez's identification with his region—"the only place where I really feel at home"—has given his writing its luminous intensity, but also seems to have shielded, or blinded, him from larger national patterns and forces. "Colombia," he writes, "had always been a country with a Caribbean identity that opened to the world by means of the umbilical cord of Panama. Its forced amputation condemned us to be what we are today: a nation with an Andean mentality whose circumstances favor the canal between the two oceans belonging not to us but to the United States."

The regret is palpable, and consequential. It would not be much of an exaggera-

tion to say that the Andean uplands that form the core of Colombian society have remained something of a closed book to García Márquez. Hence in part, no doubt, the blankness of *Living to Tell the Tale* about the civil war within which its latter half unfolds. The novelist's one venture into contemporary history, *News of a Kidnapping*, humane and gripping though it is as the account of a closing episode in drug lord Pablo Escobar's career, confirms a certain intellectual mountain sickness. For it lacks either much sense of the social context of Colombia's drug wars or critical vision of the oligarchy presiding over them. Reading it, one might be tempted to think that at bottom García Márquez has remained as unpolitical as when he started out.

That would be a mistake, as the sequel to *Living to Tell the Tale* will certainly show. But both this memoir and his fiction suggest a mind with a marvelous intuitive sensibility for the temper, the color and the details of the world in which he grew up, without much thought for definition of its relationships or structures. From this account, it would be difficult to locate García Márquez's family with any accuracy in a social scale. His grandfather, though represented as a patriarch of some substance, appears to have been originally little more than an artisan, albeit a goldsmith: The economic basis of the legendary household in Aracataca—where his father sought the hand of the "daughter of a wealthy family"—remains obscure. The ups and downs in his father's fortunes, from extreme poverty to modest comfort—seemingly unrelated to the proliferation of fifteen offspring—are only a little less elusive. In due course, clan connections reveal themselves: an uncle in the Cartagena police, capable of dispensing jobs; a professor in Bogotá; the owner of a major bookstore. How all this fitted the young Gabito into a complicated hierarchy of class and color we are left to work out for ourselves.

What, finally, of the self-portrait that emerges from this memoir? It is curiously glancing. García Márquez provides us with a thorough account of the development of his literary vocation, from school days to his mid-20s, and many a captivating incident or enthralling encounter in his journey to maturity. But what he was like as a boy or a young man is not so clear. The self-confidence his grandfather gave him as a child seems never to have left him, save for the briefest of adolescent turbulences. But there is little sign of deliberate ambition. He dwells on his shy-

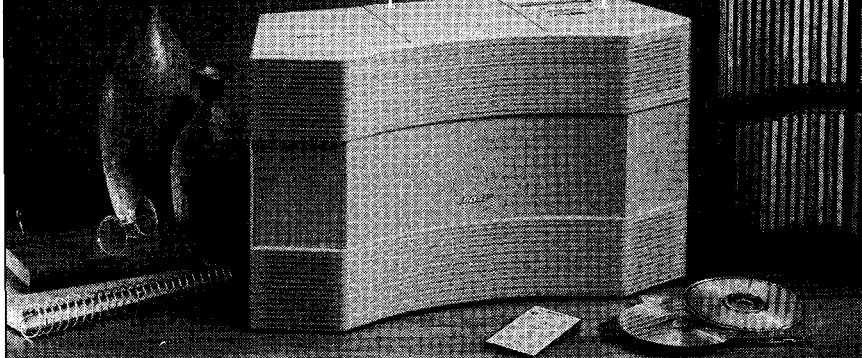
ness, but he was obviously lively company, since he was never short of friends. But how far he sought them, or whether they saw him as other than a madcap bohemian, is not revealed. In transactions with the opposite sex, seductions came mostly from women rather than himself. Though he says that when he returned to Barranquilla, "I had the timidity of a quail, which I tried to counteract with insufferable arrogance and brutal frankness," he seems to have been on generally good terms with his elders and peers, in one setting after another. No major quarrel marks this progress. Only occasionally does he allude to other, more volcanic sides to his personality—"fits of rage for any reason at all," "puerile tantrums"—but these hints are not enlarged upon.

Rather than any sustained self-analysis, García Márquez extends a generous mirror to his contemporaries. *Living to Tell the Tale* contains a teeming gallery of relatives, paramours, classmates, mentors and confederates, captured in a paragraph or a page or two. This is enough to make Anglo-Saxon readers impatient, but it is an attractive loyalty, which sets these memoirs apart from Vargas Llosa's. *A Fish in the Water*, aimed at an international public from the start, is here much thinner. García Márquez's memoirs are aimed at Colombian readers first of all.

They announce their principle of construction at the outset, in the manifesto set like an epigraph at the head of the book: "Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers and how one remembers it in order to recount it." Taken literally, this is an invitation to selective recall, with all the facilities of a convenient amnesia. There is no reason to suppose García Márquez has abused his maxim. Yet it remains legitimate to ask how far memories correspond to facts. However much license we are willing to grant an artist in reconstructing the past, we would not value the result in the same way if it all proved imaginary.

In this case, the narrative allows for some question marks in the margin. Sex, politics, literature: Each leaves a penumbra of uncertainty around the edges. Commenting on his father's "furtive hunter's ways," García Márquez mentions that there was a period when he was tempted to imitate him, but soon discovered this was "the most arid form of solitude." Nothing in his account relates to this brief avowal. In *The Fragrance of Guava* he says he belonged to a cell of the Colombian Communist Party when he was at university in Bogotá. There is no trace of this in *Living to Tell the Tale*. Of authors who shaped him, he emphasizes Faulkner. But his rule that "each sentence ought to be responsible for the entire structure," and the

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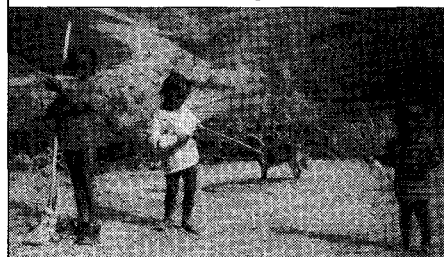
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celestial use of the adjective (he reports his aversion to adverbs) that is the signature of his prose, derive from Borges, whom he barely mentions. His abandonment of the Barranquilla group that produced the literary journal *Crónica*, the crucible of his first flourishing as a writer, is presented as an amicable parting, without trouble or resentment. Yet it slips out of the sleeve that he had

resigned as editor in a fury some time before, for reasons unspecified. It looks as if the break might have been more painful than he suggests.

Do such discrepancies matter? The epigraph absolves them. But a life and a tale are never the same thing, and the interstices—wider or narrower—between them are inescapably part of the interest of each. ■

A Near Perfect Spy Novelist

PATRICK SMITH

ABSOLUTE FRIENDS. By John le Carré. Little, Brown. 455 pp. \$26.95.

A year ago now, when the Bush Administration was preparing the world for an American invasion of Iraq, John le Carré wrote a column of scathing, sharp-toothed commentary for the *Times* of London. "America has entered one of its periods of historical madness," the piece began, "worse than McCarthyism, worse than the Bay of Pigs and in the long term potentially more disastrous than the Vietnam war." The master of espionage fiction went on to assert that "the religious cant that will send American troops into battle is perhaps the most sickening aspect of this surreal war-to-be." In a full-throated critique of "the Bush junta," le Carré rejected the with-us-or-with-the-terrorists choice Washington offered the rest of the planet and regretted, most of all, the world's failure to construct any middle ground in the matter of Saddam Hussein. "I'm dead against Bush," he wrote, "but I would love to see Saddam's downfall—just not on Bush's terms and not by his methods. And not under the banner of such outrageous hypocrisy."

One may not want to begin a consideration of any author's fiction with reference to his political views. A novel is an implicitly transformative work, after all, and a novelist's opinions as to the nature of public events are something altogether different. But it is too tempting to relate the two in le Carré's case. Both the author and the commentator have become increasingly and openly political in recent years. And le Carré doesn't seem to want readers to miss this point. His most recent book, *The Constant Gardener*, was a frontal attack on the Third World testing practices of the global pharmaceutical giants, and he chose to add a pointed postscript. "As my journey through the pharmaceutical jungle

progressed," he wrote, "I came to realize that, by comparison with the reality, my story was as tame as a holiday postcard."

Absolute Friends, le Carré's nineteenth novel in a career that now spans five decades, arrives with no such label attached, but it doesn't need one. Through the thoughts and conversations of its main characters, le Carré takes on everything from Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler and the partition of British India to the Shah of Iran, the Greek colonels, the Vietnam War and, yes, last year's invasion of Iraq. Very little of the postwar era is left out, and one is left wondering about the extent to which le Carré has made himself a ventriloquist in this book, speaking more directly through his invented voices than longtime devotees of his fiction might expect.

My guess, with a batch of le Carré's not infrequent newspaper commentaries at my elbow, is that the main characters in this book—the absolute friends of the title—can often enough be taken to speak quite explicitly for their creator. Like him, they stand for a middle way in the many divisions that beset the world we have made for ourselves—between East and West during the cold war, between American hegemony and Europe's so far supine response to it in the post-cold war years, between Islam and the West. Call it convergence, as we used to before the Berlin wall came down, or call it multilateralism, as we do now. When le Carré's protagonist, Ted Mundy, and his longtime friend Sasha speak of these matters it is hard not to hear something of le Carré's thinking in what they have to say.

But if *Absolute Friends* were no more than an exhaustive critique of postwar history it would hardly be worth its weight as a work of fiction. And for all the prominence le Carré gives politics in this book, it would be a misreading to make too much of it. In this respect le Carré is coming to resemble Graham Greene, which lands him in elevated company. Greene was probably further left than le Carré, but that is not the point. Political perspective is everywhere evident in the work of both writers—an animating force, if you like. But who would ever think to call the output of either "political novels"?

Absolute Friends is the biggest book le Carré has written since his 1986 masterpiece, *A Perfect Spy*, and is nearly as successful. Yes, there's plenty of espionage in both novels. But in the end the politics and the spying are background—devices, in a word—for these are genre novels that triumph by transcending the genre and giving us something close to important literature. The old triumvirate—plot, character and theme—are once again superbly balanced in *Absolute Friends*. Ted Mundy is every bit as complex as Magnus Pym, the perfect spy of *A Perfect Spy*. So is Sasha, Mundy's joined-for-life counterpart from their student days in the 1960s until they meet their tragic ends together in our time.

Who is Ted Mundy? As he did with Pym in *A Perfect Spy*, le Carré plants this question at the core of *Absolute Friends*. Son of a British Army officer who served in pre-partition India, he is a wayward Brit, "all things to all men and nothing to himself." After drifting through an English boarding school and a couple of years at Oxford, Mundy wanders into the student movement in West Berlin, which is where he meets Sasha and forms a friendship so close that they make a Janus of themselves. Having tried and failed as a writer, Mundy stumbles into a position at the British Council, and it is from the bowels of Britain's cultural bureaucracy that he falls into the espionage racket, using his radical credentials to infiltrate East German intelligence. Sasha, meanwhile, infiltrates the East German Stasi and begins feeding information to the West through Mundy. When the wall crumbles, they set to work with the intent of furthering a sort of non-aligned Europe, a "crucible of peace," as Sasha puts it at one point.

Both men have been discarded by their respective masters since the end of the cold war. Mundy is given seed money to launch a language school in Heidelberg—another failed venture soon enough—while Sasha

Patrick Smith is a writer and former correspondent abroad, chiefly for the *International Herald Tribune* and *The New Yorker*.

becomes an itinerant lecturer at second-tier universities in some of the world's grimmer metropolises. "So we're bereft," Mundy commiserates when again they meet: "Two Cold War burns on the skids. Is that who we are, Sasha?" It's fearfully close to the truth for Mundy, but for his part Sasha is having none of this. "You think the war's over because a bunch of old Nazis in East Germany have traded Lenin for Coca-Cola?" he asks his friend. "Do you really believe that American capitalism will make the world a sweet safe place? It will pick it dry."

So do the two make the transition from cold war espionage to a post-cold war project. (And so does le Carré write himself out of the cold war box some of his post-wall novels suggested he was trapped in.) Reflecting the preference for multiethnicity he was born into, Mundy has by now begun a tenderly described relationship with a Turkish prostitute, gotten her off the street and made himself a stepfather to her son. So he has finally found something authentic to live for. But he is drawn back into the game nonetheless. Together, Sasha and Mundy hook up with a shrouded-in-fog figure named Dimitri, a Saudi-funded Georgian dedicated to educating the world out of its "enslavement... by corporate-military alliances." The notion is to create "corporation-free academic zones," as Dimitri explains, "seminaries of unbought opinion." At this point we are treated to a lengthy diatribe against globalization and what is cast as its grotesque outgrowth, the war on terror. "We're looking at the oldest America in the book," Dimitri tells Mundy. "Puritan zealots butchering savages in the name of the Lord—how do you get older than that? It was genocide then, it's genocide today, but whoever owns the truth owns the game."

Sasha and Mundy never quite take possession of the game; in the end their vision

of a better world gets them both murdered in spectacular fashion—with film at 11 and all the rest. *Absolute Friends* is rather fatalistic in this respect. Le Carré seems to suggest that there is little hope, in our media-manipulated world of appearances, that rational thinking can triumph over the connivances of corporate-funded politicians who find fearful populaces their surest way of retaining power. It's bleak as an assessment of our present circumstances, but it is scarcely unbelievable.

But here we must depart from mere plot and recognize that *Absolute Friends* derives its power primarily from character—and

Le Carré's characters are condemned to a world in which all the choices they have allowed themselves are inadequate.

that, more than in most of his books, le Carré has drawn from his own life and experience. This is what distinguishes both *Absolute Friends* and *A Perfect Spy* from le Carré's other work. And it is in this respect that the similarities between Mundy and Magnus Pym offer us a considerable clue.

It is no secret to le Carré's admirers that *A Perfect Spy* is the most directly autobiographical of his novels, especially as the novelist painted in Pym's family background. While the surface details are altogether different, it is fundamentally the same in *Absolute Friends*. The itinerant swindler who was Pym's father becomes the declining ex-army officer who is Ted Mundy's. And both of these tumbledown dads produce large-hearted, too-eager-to-please offspring who cannot but drown in the chaos of contemporary history. The incidental correspondences between Pym and Mundy are many: the motherless childhoods, the affectionately remembered nannies, the student years in German-speaking Europe. These are all further clues to what le Carré is up to in *Absolute Friends*. But the larger point is the lostness of both Pym and Mundy. They never quite find themselves because they possess, finally, no real selves to find.

Is it because le Carré draws water from the well he knows best that his style is at its most fluid in *Absolute Friends*? It seems so to me. This book shows le Carré to be near the height of his powers precisely because, as one senses from the start, he was entirely at home with his material as he wrote it—fully in his own skin. His language has never been freer, and his jumps back and forth across time are seamless. Nor has he ever been more agile in switching from voice

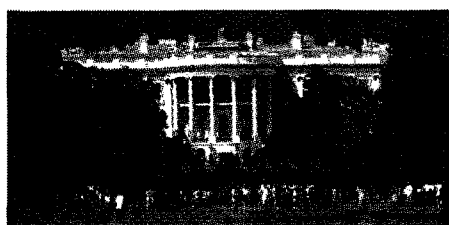
to voice as he sketches in the details of his characters. There is only one weak point in the plot, so far as I can make out. Mundy's encounter with Dimitri is a necessary bridge from one phase of the novel to the next. But it's something of a stretch. You hear a few too many gears creaking as you make your way through the Dimitri passages. It mars the book—even if slightly—and you find yourself wishing le Carré had found a better way to move the narrative forward from the long history of his two absolute friends into their (and our) tempestuous present.

One of the most striking features of *Absolute Friends* is its ambition, which can be measured across any number of dimensions. It is not just his willingness to carry his characters through the whole of the postwar era—an endeavor not too many novelists could carry

off with as much grace as le Carré musters. In the course of this, incidentally, he gives us a marvelous rendering of how the 1960s generation managed to morph from manning the barricades into lawyering and administrating and teaching and licking envelopes for established political parties. More important, however, is le Carré's steady and masterful interweaving of the personal and the public, political lives of both Mundy and Sasha. In the end, *Absolute Friends* is about identity—like many of his other novels, including *A Perfect Spy*. But let us understand this point well. Le Carré's concern is our various, changing, eternally ambivalent selves. We are condemned—or have condemned ourselves, he perhaps wants to tell us—to a world in which all the choices we have allowed ourselves are inadequate: Those we would make with conviction we have put beyond our grasp.

Absolute Friends is, once again, a novel that reaches vastly beyond the genre fiction for which le Carré is noted. But he deploys all the best features of his espionage novels to make his new book as effective as it is. Given the primacy of character in *Absolute Friends*, the spy game is ultimately a backdrop—or a proscenium, perhaps. But decades of literary learnings are on display here. And in staying with espionage le Carré raises a couple of interesting questions.

Intentionally or otherwise, *Absolute Friends* is an announcement that the cold war is at last passing into history. But how are we to understand our common memory of it—and, more to the point, how have we been marked by it? Equally, is the espionage genre somehow becoming the best source of novels that engage both politics and history? With the Modernist era now behind us and its worthwhile lessons absorbed,



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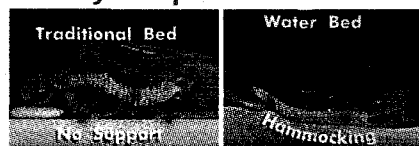
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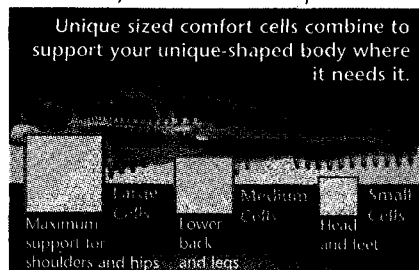
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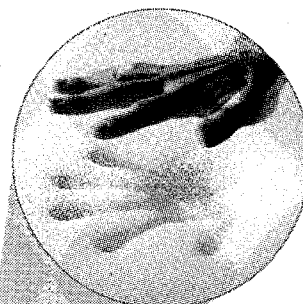
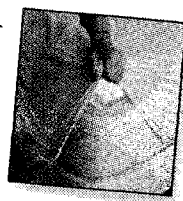


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are spy novels among those that speak most directly to us of the way we live now? If so, why would this be? Is it because we, like Mundy, are forever caught in a world of appearances and dense,

undiscerned realities? Whether he means to say so or not, le Carré seems to have clear answers to these questions. And he offers them to us on a great deal more than holiday postcards. ■

THEATER

The Closest of Strangers

BAZ DREISINGER

CAROLINE, OR CHANGE

Tony Kushner's latest play, *Caroline, or Change*, left me contemplating its curious title, which suggests an indecisive playwright. Why not just *Caroline*, or simply *Change*? Are two titles better than one?

In this case, absolutely. *Caroline, or Change*, a collaboration with composer Jeanine Tesori and director George C. Wolfe at New York's Public Theater, is a work in which so much hinges on that little "or" in the title. Built around parallels and contrasts, duos and dualisms, the play brilliantly constructs a series of either/ors and then defies our efforts to choose between them. Call it the theater of indecision: drama that counters everything with its opposite. Or call it the right way to tackle a subject with a history too knotty for the sort of pat treatment it might, in other hands, receive: the longtime love-hate affair between blacks and Jews.

It's best to start with plot. Kushner would have it no other way: "Theater is as much a part of trash culture as it is high art," he once said. "It has to have the jokes and it has to have the feathers and the mirrors and the smoke." The tenor of a metaphor is only as good as its vehicle. *Caroline, or Change* erects symbolic castles in the air but never loses sight of the literal; it is first and foremost an entertaining musical treat and—thankfully—a good story.

This story, largely biographical, unfolds in the suburbs of Lake Charles, Louisiana, just as 1963 is to become 1964. Critical years become musical leitmotifs: Kennedy's assassination is momentarily mourned in an early scene, and "civil rights" is a quasi-magical mantra, its promise and potency not yet realized. Events occur in one of two worlds, which contrast and crisscross: master or servant;

black or, well, not black (though not, we learn, quite white, either). Caroline Thibodeaux (Tonya Pinkins) is the Gellmans' African-American maid—of a generation for whom there's no "African-American," only "Negro." She has four children (including a son in Vietnam). Her workload is heavy and her wage light: "\$30 ain't enough," Caroline sighs in an early number. Noah Gellman (Harrison Chad), on the other hand, is a 9-year-old Jewish boy—among Southerners for whom there's no "Jewish," only "Christian." He has four parents (including a mother who has passed away, a stepmother who's just joined the family and Caroline, an *ur*-mom). His workload is light and his allowance heavy: Noah's pocket change, enough to keep his pants jingling, affords him the habit of delivering coin-filled clothes to the laundry—where Caroline decoins them.

Caroline, or Change thus lives either in the world of Caroline, where money is scarce—or in the world of change, where it is not. Caroline churns out her labor in the bowels of the house, but even in her basement domain she is not master: Towering over her, literally and metaphorically, are the washing machine, the radio and the electric dryer—comically personified by an Arethaesque soprano, a Supremes-style trio and a smooth baritone à la James Brown. She may lack change, but Caroline gets 2 cents from these outspoken appliances whether she likes it or not. Mostly she doesn't like it, but Caroline, ever scowling, doesn't like much: not her friend and fellow maid, Dotty, flitting about in bobby socks and attending college; not her daughter, Emmie, who declares herself "black" and waxes

radical ("I ain't got no tears to shed for no dead white guy," Emmie sings of JFK). Most of all, Caroline doesn't like "making *bubkes*," as Mrs. Gellman—sympathetic to the "Negro maid"—puts it.

Rose Stopnick Gellman's domain is the world above the basement: a living room in which the living isn't easy. It offers a mélange of white-bread, 1950s-style melodrama—emotional scars lurk beneath jovial *Leave It to Beaver* routines—and Jewish dysfunction of the Philip Roth variety: Young boy, passive father, stepmother whose all-purpose anodyne is another pot of stuffed cabbage. Mrs. Gellman's recent marriage has led her down South, exiling her from the Upper West Side and leaving her in a state of New York withdrawal. Kushner paints her a bit too over-the-top—the Jewish mother stereotype can take on a life of its own—but her husband is understated: Still mourning his first wife, he's passive and absent, in a state of withdrawal from life itself. And little Noah—inhabiting a bedroom suspended over the living room—is himself emotionally suspended between a new mother and an old one. So he turns to Caroline, of whom he gleefully sings: "Caroline!/the President of the United States/Caroline, who's always mad!/Caroline, who runs everything!/Caroline, who's stronger than my dad!"

In Brechtian fashion, Caroline and Noah's bond is soiled by that which soils any emotional bond: cold cash. Instructing Caroline to keep the pocket change she finds in Noah's laundry, Mrs. Gellman, hoping to teach Noah a lesson, turns his emotional exchange with Caroline into a fiscal one. The play becomes an either/or dilemma worthy of *The New York Times Magazine's* "Ethicist" column: Has Caroline, finding Noah's \$20 Hanukkah gelt in her laundry load, rights to it or not? Bickering, Noah and Caroline end up hurling racial slurs at each other.

Truth rears its head—and nothing propels it like change. I mean this in the literal sense—what's more literal than economics?—but also in the metaphorical one. "Noah has a problem with change," Mrs. Gellman sings, and we know she's talking more than nickels and dimes. As Kushner buries us in "change" metaphors—heavily-handedly, yes, but with so much panache we forgive him—change turns to change. In this year of great political and cultural upheaval, Caroline hates change but her children lust after it. Noah's coins rest in a bleach cup, reminding us of what Jews, newly nestled in the suburbs, had discovered: Money is the ultimate whitening agent

Baz Dreisinger, who teaches English and American studies at the City University of New York, is writing a book about racial passing in American culture.

in America. Literal and figurative thus become happy bedfellows, and the play's title earns a question mark: What will prevail, Caroline—who “can't afford change,” she sings—or her nemesis, change itself?

With the hindsight of history, we can answer such a question. Or can we? From *A Bright Room Called Day*, his early play about the final months of the Weimar Republic, to *Angels in America*, his opus about the dying millennium, Kushner has been fascinated by the cusp of change, the proverbial rumble before the storm. Like those earlier plays, *Caroline, or Change* dramatizes a fork in the road of history. It's a modern-day morality play in which clashing ideologies are personified by clashing characters. Kushner resolves one such clash for us: Caroline's children, notably her change-happy daughter, Emmie, are the last ones on stage—suggesting that the future belongs to change, not to Caroline.

But other tensions linger. Northern versus Southern attitudes toward race are dramatized by two sets of in-laws. For Mrs. Gellman's father—an old-school New York socialist who's “waiting for revolution” because “nonviolence will get you burned”—blacks are characters in a fantasy of radical change; a powerful idea, unscathed by contact with actual black people. Stuart Gellman's Southern parents, by contrast, view black people through the “benevolent” but racist lens of paternalism, yet their views are anything but abstract, grounded as they are in their relationships with “the help.” Both attitudes are flawed, and even today, we'd be hard pressed to deem one more palatable than the other. Instead of making one philosophy triumph, Kushner leaves us grappling with the blunders of both, denying us the easy comforts of complacency.

Take, for instance, the relationship between Noah and his father. Does the future of American Jewishness lie with the latter, who “doesn't believe in God and all that corny stuff,” or with the former, who's plainly yet naïvely in search of a higher being? What happens when faith becomes, as it did for snugly American Jews of the 1950s and '60s, a “neutered Judaism,” to quote *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner, that's “watered down to fit America”? *Caroline, or Change* has, at its core, profound reservations about the shape of contemporary American Judaism—especially its vexed relationship to African-American culture. This relationship—what the play is patently about—has been neatly captured by Cornel West's observation that “Jews and blacks have been linked in a kind of symbiotic relation with each other.” Such “symbiosis” has worn various historical guises: cultural exchange

or exploitation (Al Jolson sporting blackface, or Def Jam founder Rick Rubin peddling rap group Public Enemy), political advocacy (Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner in Mississippi) and personal affiliation. But in most cases the black-Jew bond has been reduced to facile, feel-good claims about vague yet innate alliances between similar groups: black-Jew buddy fantasies à la *Driving Miss Daisy* or *I'm Not Rappaport*. Not so in Kushner's hands. By way of a little Jewish boy and his black maid—an inherently charged scenario—*Caroline, or Change* lays bare the deeper, less picture-perfect dynamics of that “special” bond.

These dynamics were addressed by an eloquent exchange that occurred, as it happens, in the same year in which *Caroline, or Change* is set. Looking askance (and perhaps a tad jealously) on Irving Howe's high praise for Richard Wright, served up in Howe's 1963 *Dissent* essay “Black Boys and Native Sons,” Ralph Ellison leveled a blunt blow: “The real guilt of such Jewish intellectuals,” he wrote in response, “lies in their facile, perhaps unconscious, but certainly unrealistic identification with what is called the ‘power structure.’ Negroes call that ‘passing for white.’”

Jews passing for white? It's an odd claim, but not an implausible one in certain contexts—1920s America, for instance, when xenophobia and nativism made racial lines sharper than ever, and Jews could not be certain where they stood with respect to the color line. In other contexts—like 1950s America, when Jews were suburb-bound, or contemporary America, now that they're suburb-settled—the claim is harder to sustain. True, a longtime legacy of anti-Semitism has promoted Jewish identification with African-American causes and cultures (and, occasionally, with African-Americans themselves). Such is the identification embraced by little Noah Gellman, a Jew among Christian Southerners. The best number in the play is one in which the boy imagines himself “Noah Thibodeaux,” one of Caroline's children: “Now I know what they talk about/at the Thibodeaux house, at suppertime,” he sings, visualizing his pocket change among Caroline's kin. “Now they count their quarters and/they talk about me!” Noah longs for Caroline, but more than that, he longs for a world he imagines as the better opposite of his own: bleak but blithe, poor but playful. His are the “noble savage” fantasies of the privileged. Watching the Jewish boy shoo-shoop and doo-wop beside three black children evokes Jolson or Sophie Tucker singing of Mammy on the Broadway stage, of-

fering an impressive version of someone else's song. It's the musical incarnation of a black-Jew partnership based on homage, envy, collaboration and theft—a partnership that indeed has one foot in truth.

But this partnership also has one foot in fantasy. Even as Ellison takes Howe to task for passing for white, implicitly asserting a parallel between black and Jew, he accuses him in the same exchange of having so little actual affiliation with blacks that “when he looks at a Negro he sees not a human being but an abstract embodiment of living hell.” There's theory, in which the two groups are and ought to be aligned, and then there's the reality of history, which has dealt blacks and Jews very different cards (including, for instance, different physical features). Cultures can't be collapsed so easily. We chuckle at “Noah Thibodeaux” because his identification with Caroline is understandable, yet also futile and immature. The notion that blacks and Jews are merrily of a piece is given some credence by Kushner—but deeply undermined by the fact that it's voiced by a naïve, narcissistic child.

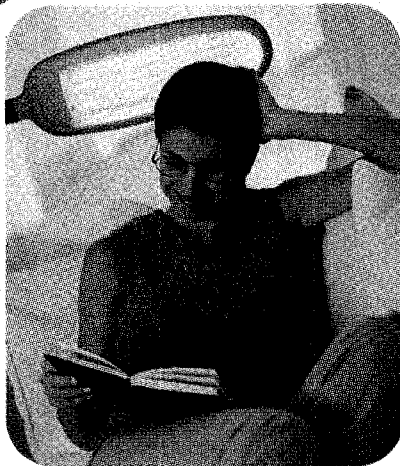
Noah's buddy fantasy takes its final blow after his fight with Caroline. The boy sweetly asks if they can be friends again. “Weren't never friends,” she sings in reply. “Some-day we'll talk again,/but they's things we'll never say/That sorrow deep inside you,/It's inside me, too,/And it never go away./You be OK.”

Will Caroline be OK? We never find out. Neither do we find out how Noah's Jewish children grew up, racially speaking; we only surmise that their America has a prominent place for hip-hop culture—which Jews, from the Beastie Boys to Rick Rubin, had a hand in. Like another fine exploration of the black-Jewish bond, *The Color of Water*, James McBride's 1996 memoir about his Jewish mother, who all but passed for black after marrying a black man, *Caroline, or Change* makes the wise move of asking more than it answers. Both stories take on race relations by examining the relations between a mother and her sometime son. And both refuse to sell this relationship short by reducing it to a buddy tale about two “othered” individuals. The play scrutinizes this fantasy, laying bare its complex and contradictory parameters.

Only through music does the play find a sense of resolution. An amalgam of soul, Motown, klezmer and Broadway numbers—in other words, of Jewish and black musical forms—*Caroline, or Change* asserts musically what it makes a point of denying thematically: Blacks and Jews can achieve seamless fusion. There is no

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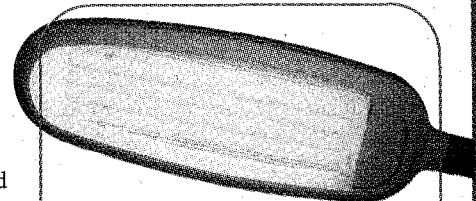
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Caroline-Noah embrace to say that hey, we can all just get along—but there is singing and dancing.

Its music is a generic collage, and so, ultimately, is the whole of *Caroline, or Change*. On the one hand it evokes race-related films of its period, which wore their lessons on their sleeves: *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, or Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life*. Such films are more didactic than a first-grade teacher—and Kushner can be, too. For good reason: Like all his work, *Caroline, or Change* is designed to make us think and, ultimately, act.

Didacticism, though, relies on moral absolutes: Lessons should be firm and true enough to be taught. But like most great writers, Kushner understands that life is contradictory, and that absolutes are difficult to come by. His is the paradox of the activist-artist: An "activist" relies on moral imperatives, but an "artist" sees many sides in issues and many faces in humanity. And so Kushner has it both ways, writing a play that is, at its core, a grand either/or: didactic protest piece—or morally ambiguous art? *Caroline, or Change* succeeds by having its cake and eating it, too—by having the guise of the former and the soul of the latter and being, in the end, both.

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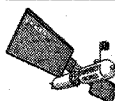
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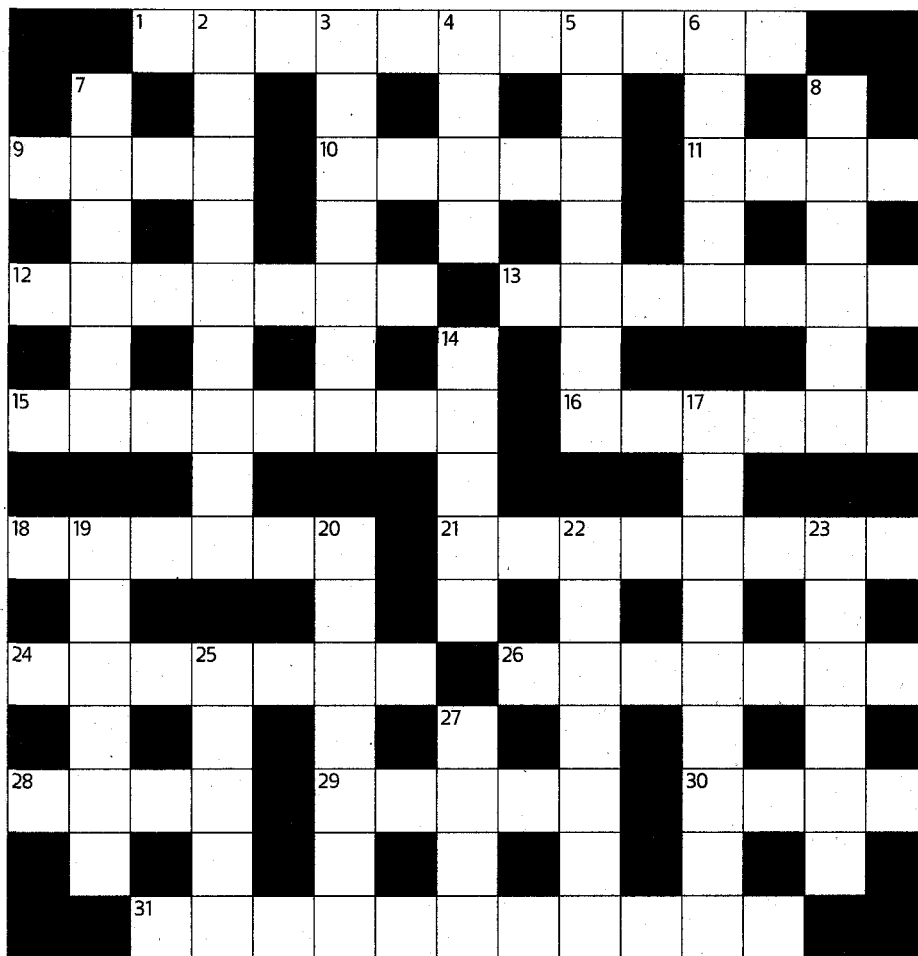
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ACROSS

- 1 Sometimes used as a pejorative, with what could be a knockout to a member of the *Muridae* family. (6,5)
- 9 A ring around the top? A famous prince gets nothing for it. (4)
- 10 and 11 Took a chance, being quick to come back like a guy going over Niagara in a barrel. (9)
- 12 Eyes perhaps some of those 1 across things that ought to know what time it is. (7)
- 13 Those who stop showing what some women wear in the summer? (7)
- 15 The pairing of chromosomes, as in the confusing case of the pansy's, is so described. (8)
- 16 Look at what some not-too-legal tellers do when not winning! (6)
- 18 If you're the type that never makes a mistake, you may not need one. (6)
- 21 If you do, you change (for example) nothing but one of the things representing "me, myself and I." (5,3)
- 24 Not the quality of being even "strange" exhibited if you have it. (7)
- 26 An ancient city of Greece, proving my broken cane still has a point. (7)
- 28 See 4 down
- 29 and 19 down Might be made right, and right in the wrong side—like Teddy's followers. (5,6)
- 30 A reed bent back reveals a shy beast. (4)
- 31 12 across might be expected to be this. (They keep track of what the worker is doing.) (4-7)

DOWN

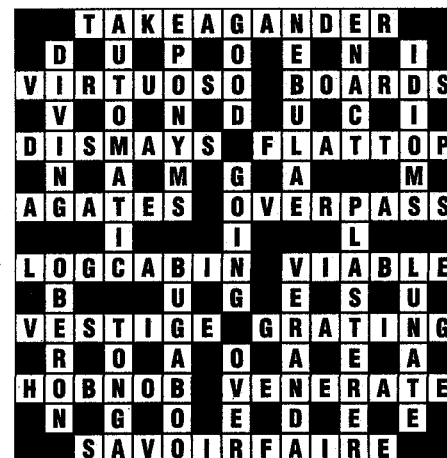
- 2 Monitor one of them, when Jeremy the actor gets dressed inside. (9)
- 3 Fools around, around the marshal, but they're important parts of any body. (7)
- 4 and 28 across "Long rifles" offer a place to hang a sheet. (8)



- 5 Certainly not the one you are behind, if in trouble—but one is real strange! (7)
- 6 and 17 Giving up candy? That's what old-fashioned love got involved with! (5,9)
- 7 They say a worker is worth his salt because the boss supplied it in the old days—and today. (6)
- 8 With this, Ella was supposed to keep the bugs away, in the cake! (6)
- 14 Dawgonnit! An afterthought to the Lord who was so doubly irritating in WWII. (5)
- 17 See 6
- 19 See 29 across
- 20 What one may have to do after a foot-fault, showing what the very conservative type has. (7)
- 22 This might be said if they are mechanical rabbits, bought here. (7)

- 23 Ground ground! It's right in what the speaker might pound! (6)
- 25 Oriental, but "Born in the USA"—that is, evil rises this way. (5)
- 27 A tricky ruse, to be certain! (4)

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THE FIVE BIGGEST LIES BUSH TOLD US ABOUT IRAQ

By Christopher Scheer,
Robert Scheer, and
Lakshmi Chaudhry



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Christopher Scheer is a staff writer at *AlterNet.org*, the independent news and commentary website. Robert Scheer is the author of six books, a nationally syndicated columnist based at the *Los Angeles Times*, a contributing editor at *The Nation*, and a host of NPR affiliate

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KCRW's *Left, Right, and Center*. Lakshmi Chaudhry is a senior editor at *AlterNet.org*.

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